COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

Volume III SUMMER 1951 Number 3

A SYMPOSIUM ON REALISM

Arranged by Harry Levin

What Is Realism? By Harry Levin 193

The Sense of the Real in English Fiction. By Robert Gorham Davis 200

L'Essence du réalisme français. By Albert J. Salvan 218

Realism in the German Novel. By Henry C. Hatfield 234

Realism in Russia. By Renato Poggioli 253

Realism in America. By Bernard R. Bowron, Jr. 268

Book Reviews 286

A Critical Bibliography of the Published Writings of Romain Rolland, by William Thomas Starr (Anna Balakian). *Cancioncillas "de amigo" mozárabes*, by Dámaso Alonso (Francisco López Estrada).

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, EUGENE, OREGON

With the Cooperation of the Comparative Literature Section of the Modern Language Association of America

Issued quarterly. Entered as second-class matter, April 5, 1949, at the postoffice at Eugene, Oregon, under act of August 24, 1912.

Comparative Literature

Editor

CHANDLER B. BEALL
University of Oregon
Eugene, Ore.

Associate Editor

WERNER P. FRIEDERICH
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, N. C.

Editorial Board

FRANCIS FERGUSSON
Princeton University
Princeton, N. J.

VICTOR LANGE
Cornell University
Ithaca, N. Y.

HELMUT HATZFELD
Catholic University
Washington, D. C.

HARRY LEVIN
Harvard University
Cambridge, Mass.

RENÉ WELLEK
Yale University
New Haven, Conn.

FOUNDED at a time when the strengthening of good international relations is of paramount importance, *Comparative Literature* provides a forum for those scholars and critics who are engaged in the study of literature from an international point of view. Its editors define comparative literature in the broadest possible manner, and accept articles dealing with the manifold interrelations of literatures, with the theory of literature, movements, genres, periods, and authors —from the earliest times to the present. They particularly welcome longer studies on comprehensive topics and on problems of criticism.

Manuscripts, editorial communications, and books for review should be addressed to: Comparative Literature, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The subscription rate is $3.50 a year. The price of single copies is $1.00. Correspondence concerning subscriptions should be addressed to: University of Oregon Publications, Eugene, Oregon. Correspondence concerning exchanges should be addressed to: University of Oregon Library, Eugene, Oregon.

Autres livres à télécharger sur le site
https://abbassa.wordpress.com

COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

VOLUME III SUMMER 1951 NUMBER 3

WHAT IS REALISM?

HARRY LEVIN

IN STATING an issue which others will then be called upon to face, propounding very sketchily the terms to which their articles will lend concrete significance, perhaps I should invoke the special protection of jesting Pilate—that patron saint of profound inquiries superficially pursued. For the problem that I have undertaken to pose brings up a number of incidental and ultimate questions which we could not stop for, even if we knew the answers, within a single issue of the present journal. The most we can hope for is to focus, upon the main tendency of modern literature, the same sort of analytic and evaluative discussion that has already been concentrated upon the topic of romanticism. At the outset we can answer Pilate's question, positivistically and tautologically, by defining truth as the accurate correspondence between reality itself and a given account of reality. We are thereupon confronted by the question, "What is reality?" Since it cannot bear precisely the same significance for any two human beings, Carlyle declared that "reality escapes us." Let us concede the point; let it stand as x, the unknown element in whatever formulation we may reach. We come closer by approaching the problem from the other side—by sorting out the testimony that various witnesses have deposed, charting the general direction they seem to indicate, and tentatively calling this process of approximation "realism."

But here another difficulty arises, insofar as some of them lead in opposite directions. For example, the trend of modern thought toward empiricism, materialism, pragmatism, naturalism came to a head a generation ago when two schools of philosophers all but agreed: the so-

called "New Realists" and the so-called "Critical Realists." V. L. Parrington broadened the area of agreement by applying the term "critical realism" to the recent period in American literature. More recently, however, there have been accumulating signs of reversion to an older kind of realism, the scholastic kind that proceeded from the doctrine of *universalia ante rem*. Shunted between two extreme positions which claim the same title, we may turn from epistemology to etymology, and take the Latin root word *res* as our starting point. It is well to remember that the word contains, as it were, the thing. It is not altogether farfetched to observe that, semantically speaking, "realism" is distantly connected with "real estate." That quasi-legal connection is tangibly supported by the bonds of interest that tie so many novelists to the realistic tradition: by Balzac's sense of property, Dickens's inventories and Tolstoy's estates, Henry James's preoccupation with "things."

We lose little by confining our attention to that terrain of experience which philosophical sophistication would label "naive realism." Its classic gesture occurred when Dr. Johnson kicked the stone. Characteristically it manifests itself by repudiating some manifestation of idealism. When publicists tell us to look at a situation realistically, we can be fairly certain that we are about to be asked to condone some piece of moral skulduggery. Instead of an appeal to principle, we are presented with a repudiation of principle. Thus the realistic attitude derives its meaning from the conditions of its application. Like the concept of liberty, it cannot exist in a vacuum; in the abstract it means virtually nothing. History defines our liberties in terms of the specific constraints they sought to overcome; free speech and free trade presuppose unjust imprisonment and arbitrary taxation, the *lettre de cachet* and the *gabelle*. The purport of President Roosevelt's Four Freedoms lay in their counterattack against four tyrannies. In this respect as in others, realism closely parallels the development of liberalism—another protean phenomenon which can only be pinned down by firmly grasping its varied responses to particular issues.

So much is clear, as Karl Mannheim has said: "Realism means different things in different contexts." Its would-be historians may well be deterred by the object-lesson of Lord Acton's uncompleted *History of Liberty*. But students of literature have the measurable advantage of working from texts as well as contexts, and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis* has lately shown what stylistic analysis can do, when trained upon the descriptive techniques of selected authors from Homer to Virginia Woolf. When Professor Auerbach finds no formula for the presentation of actuality (*dargestellte Wirklichkeit*) in different languages at different epochs, he impressively documents our need for assuming a relativistic point of view. Possibly an absolute standard could be set up in the

plastic arts, where the actual object can be directly compared with its artistic treatment. Yet even there the realism seems to be a matter of degree, varying with choice of subject and emphasis on detail. Even when we speak of "photographic reproduction," we cannot take for granted its objectivity. The very phrase *trompe-l'œil* gives it away. The camera's eye is relatively less subjective than the eye of the beholder; yet it was photography which opened the way for impressionistic painting, which in turn has angled and composed and highlighted the art of the photographer.

Perhaps, like students of the diverging "romanticisms," we should pluralize our subject; but we should not, like some of them, allow divergences to obscure a fundamental impetus. Art has continually adapted itself to man's changing conceptions of reality—that is to say, his successive adjustments to society and nature. In a static culture, where his position is fixed and his world-view unchanging, expression is likely to be conventionalized. But Occidental culture has been dynamic, and its arts have endeavored to keep pace with its accelerating changes. This distinction, which is broadly exemplified in the contrast between East and West, sharply emerged from the Iconoclastic Controversy, when Eastern orthodoxy prescribed a rigid convention while Western artists were free to move toward secularization, individuality, realism —from the symbolic, in short, to the representational. Now if, as Aristotle maintains, art springs from the interplay of two complementary instincts, μίμησις and ἁρμονία, there are times when the imitation of nature predominates and other times when it is subordinated to the imposition of a pattern. When Plato condemned poetry for its unreality (in the most idealistic and paradoxical sense of that term), Aristotle proposed a compromise in the name of poetic truth and higher reality, and thence handed on the doctrine of verisimilitude to the neoclassical critics.

Meanwhile the sphere of the probable expanded, while much that the ancients regarded as universal was seen by the moderns to be more limited. Against such limitations romanticism protested, when Wordsworth and Coleridge set out to write about lower ranks of society and stranger wonders of nature than classicism seemed willing to recognize. Not that the classicists excluded realism, but they relegated it to the comic stage; comedy was the *imago veritatis*, and the common man was no hero but a figure of fun. The medium that most completely mirrors the increasing stature of the middle class has been, of course, the major vehicle of literary realism, the novel. The novel originated, with a characteristic gesture, by repudiating its mediaeval predecessor; the picaresque tale overtook the knightly romance; and Cervantes, by pitting the daily realities of the developing city against the chivalric ideals

of the declining castle, provided an archetype for all novelists and future realists. "La rivalité du monde réel et de la représentation que nous nous en faisons"—this might be a French critic's description of *Don Quixote*. It happens to be André Gide's description of what his novelist is attempting in *Les Faux-monnayeurs*.

Conversely, looking backward from Gide, we can see how every great novel has attempted—*mutatis mutandis*—to distinguish what is real from what is counterfeit. Defoe's narrations, he invariably assured his readers, are not fiction but fact; and Diderot pointedly entitled one of his stories *Ceci n'est pas un conte*. To convince us of his essential veracity, the novelist must always be disclaiming the fictitious and breaking through the encrustations of the literary. "La vraie éloquence se moque de l'éloquence." It is no coincidence that, from Rabelais to Jane Austen, so many realists have begun as parodists; it has even been argued, by Viktor Shklovsky, that parody is the basis of the novelistic form. We must not assume that, because it is polymorphous, the novel is formless; nor that writers very easily or spontaneously express themselves in a realistic mode. "No more literary school than the realists has ever existed," as George Moore, their leading British apologist, allowed. But we must first go—as Moore did—to France, where most of the problems of modern literature have been formulated, if we would track the critical usage down to its historical context. (If we would trace it to its metaphysical chrysalis, we should have to look even farther back to Germany, to Schiller's *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung*, where antique *Realismus* is contrasted with the idealistic outlook of the romantics.)

The earliest applications of the term that we encounter in the *New English Dictionary* are cited from Emerson in 1856 and Ruskin in 1857: the first is roughly synonymous with "materialism," the second with "grotesquerie," and both are decidedly pejorative. In France, on the other hand, the latter year marks the trial and vindication of *Madame Bovary*—a date as important for realism as the *première* of *Hernani* is for romanticism. The relationship between the two movements, as we acknowledge more and more, is continuous rather than antithetical. The realism of the romanticists has its dialectical counterpart in the romanticism of the realists, and it would be hard to say under which category we should classify *La Chartreuse de Parme* or *Les Misérables*. As early as 1826, investigation has shown, *le romantisme* and *le réalisme* echoed interchangeably through contemporary periodicals. But in the phrase of its journalistic fugleman, Champfleury, realism was one of "those religions in -ism" which came into the world in 1848. Its preparation had been technical as well as ideological; it profited from Daguerre's epoch-making invention, which entered the

public domain in 1839, as well as from Houssaye's history of Flemish painting published in 1846. It reached its artistic climax when Courbet, whose paintings were rejected by the Salon of 1855, set up his own exhibition of these solidly executed studies in humble life, which he called his *Pavillon du Réalisme*.

The critic Duranty summed up objectives when he called for "the exact, complete, and sincere reproduction of the social milieu in which we live." His little magazine, *Réalisme*, coincided with a collection of essays under the same title, brought out by Champfleury in 1857. By then the catchword was becoming popular; even M. Prudhomme, the bourgeois incarnate, could sign his letters with assurances of his "distinguished consideration and realism." However, Duranty believed that the realists were too individualistic to establish a school, while Champfleury considered them transitional and expected them to give way before another movement in thirty years. Within half that time, in the 1870s, Zola was putting out manifestoes for naturalism. Where the older group had posthumously venerated Balzac, the naturalists paid homage to Flaubert, but he remained indifferent to schools and slogans. When Zola amiably admitted that these were devices to gain publicity for younger writers, he scarcely did justice to the grimmer implications of the newer term—the boundless distance between Robinson Crusoe's easy control over his environment and the crushed victims of Hardy's cosmic irony or Dreiser's chemical determinism.

Naturalism found its inspiration in science rather than art, its exemplar in Darwin rather than Courbet. In contrast to the accumulation of things, the jumbled catalogues of realism, its objects were meticulously selected and related through the chain of cause and effect. Seeking to complete the process of identification between literature and life, it conceived a book as a *document humain* and a play as a *tranche de vie*. But Zola's novels were experimental in quite a different sense from the physiological experimentation of Claude Bernard. Their twofold aim is reflected in their subtitle: *Histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire*. As natural history, they demonstrate nothing; they simply illustrate the obsolescent theories of Zola's scientific contemporaries. Their social story is something else again, combining the exposure of bureaucracy with a plea for the underdog, each volume covering another field of documentation. Zola, writing in retrospect, gave voice to the political opposition that the Second Empire vainly tried to silence. Similarly in Russia, under the tsars, in spite of censorship, suppression, and regimentation, writers were able to lodge their protest against an even more autocratic régime. Perhaps because Russians had to live a lie, as Turgenev suggested, their novels were so intensely devoted to truth.

Into the second half of the nineteenth century, realists and naturalists carried augmenting burdens of social criticism and humanitarian sympathy. The brothers Goncourt, for all their aristocratic tastes, furthered the advance of proletarian fiction; they urged, in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*, the right of the lower class to a novel of its own. The spread of democracy, the rise in the standard of living, the exploitation of typography and literacy brought pressure for further extensions of the literary franchise. Hence Harriet Beecher Stowe announced that *Uncle Tom's Cabin (or Life among the Lowly)* would treat a theme "hitherto ignored by the associations of polite and refined society." Politeness and refinement inevitably hold a vested interest in the *status quo*, which is loudly outraged by the depiction of uncomfortable facts and ignoble existences, and would outlaw them by invoking the ambiguous sanction of universality. Official and academic sponsorship, reducing the dynamic to the static, produce what William Dean Howells termed "a petrification of taste." Resistance is no less inevitable than movement, and repeats itself over the years. Just as Brunetière deprecated the naturalistic school, just as the disillusioned novels of the First World War were attacked by propagandists for the Second, so the hired moralists of *Life* magazine have latterly been editorializing against *From Here to Eternity* and *The Naked and the Dead*.

None the less realism, heralded by romanticism and continued by naturalism, has been the animating current of nineteenth-century literature. Today it no longer operates as an *avant-garde*; it has acquired tradition and even academies. Watchwords continue to become outmoded and novelties must be rediscovered again and again; the naturists supersede the naturalists and the verists yield to self-proclaimed veritists; and yet the real thing seems even more remote than before. Can it be that this progression, which has moved on so rapidly from generation to generation, is slowing down to an impasse? The next step, to judge from *surréalisme* (or "superrealism"), seems to be less a new projection of the old realism than a sharp reaction against it—against representation in favor of symbolism. Such landmarks as Joyce's *Ulysses*, pointing in two directions, lead forward—or is it backward?—via psychology toward fantasy and myth. The technological obsolescence of the novel itself is predictable in an era when fiction can hardly keep up with fact, when the reporter turns novelist and the novelist turns reporter, when the instinct for imitation is more efficiently satisfied by journalism, radio, film, and above all television. Within the abstracted realm now left to the purer arts, it may be that the instinct for harmony—for order, degree, and arrangement—will again prevail.

Whatever happens is bound to register the adaptation to change, but the quality of change may prove so far-reaching as to undermine the

tendencies upon which realism has been grounded: a democratic attitude toward society, an experimental attitude toward nature. The forces that work against social mobility and scientific inquiry are those that steer writers back into the province of convention. Much of the writing that confronts us, at this midpoint of the twentieth century, seems transitional in character: conventional in pattern, realistic in detail. Yet an art which must submit itself, either to production codes or party lines, is basically unrealistic. Witness, on the one hand, the cinema. And, on the other, the neo-Marxist slogan of "socialist realism" is, in the light of historical definition, a contradiction in terms. The role of the great realists—as who but Gorki pointed out?—has been to transcend their own class, to criticize the bourgeoisie. It does not necessarily follow that their successors ought to panegyrize the proletariat. Middle-class culture, with all its faults, has had its virtue—the redeeming virtue of self-criticism. "Kunst wird Kritik," Thomas Mann has lately remarked, and the bourgeois novel is nothing if not critical. It may have told the whole truth very rarely, and included many other things than the truth; but it has kept open the question "What is truth?" in the teeth of dogmas and systems that strive to close it.

In reducing our theme to a handful of historical and critical generalizations, I am aware that these preliminary comments do much less than justice to its large diversity and striking particularity; and, for this reason and others, I have greater confidence in the major part of our collective undertaking, which is embodied in the five essays that follow. These are by no means intended as a comprehensive survey, enumerating the many and far-flung titles that have been ticketed as realistic. Rather they constitute a tentative inquiry as to what is meant when certain works are so designated, what traits their authors share, and wherein they differ. To test how far these differences may be pushed, and how much consistency of intention and execution remains, we have subdivided our endeavor along the lines of the various national literatures. The question has in each case been put to an accomplished scholar, for consideration in the special light of his field. The fields, as they are represented here, require no explanation or apology; but it is regrettable that other literary traditions could not, for reasons of space, also be discussed. We could scarcely pretend to completeness without some appraisal of the early and vital developments in Italy and Spain or of the late and unique flowering in the Scandinavian countries. And it would be useful to verify our premises, which derive from a closely related group of cultures, by considering parallels among the Classics or in the Near and Far East. Our task, however, is not conclusive but introductory; we merely wish to open a discussion which, we sincerely hope, others will broaden and deepen.

Harvard University

THE SENSE OF THE REAL IN ENGLISH FICTION

ROBERT GORHAM DAVIS

IT IS impossible to discuss fictional realism in terms more serious than those of current taste or conventional morality, without returning to some very old questions about the nature of truth and the nature of art. With occasional Platonic admixtures, the classical tradition in this discussion has been dominated by the formulas of the *Poetics*, and especially by Aristotle's distinction between the higher truth of poetry and the lower truth of history. This, for instance, was Henry Fielding's point of departure when he set out as a conscious innovator to make the English novel, as imitation of nature, one of the classical "kinds."

When, however, a break occurs in the tradition, as happened in the mid-nineteenth century in England, when there was almost no major criticism of the novel, the problem of a "new" realism may seem genuinely new, and may be discussed with little explicit reference to the past. But the issues and even the terms used necessarily remain the same. The *Querelle du Cid* was certainly of very slight interest to Charlotte Brontë or Thomas Hardy. And yet, when Charlotte Brontë rejected Jane Austen's "daguerreotyped" fiction as "more real than true," and Hardy, criticizing Zola, defined art as "more truthful than truth," their formulas are remarkably close to the plays upon *vrai* and *vraisemblable* of such fairly remote figures as Scudéry and Chapelain, Huet and Le Bossu.

Those French neoclassic arguments which were most antirealistic in tendency were consciously borrowed by Collier, in 1698, in his *Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage*, and unconsciously repeated by London journalists of the late 1870s and early 1880s in the flood of attacks on the new French realism which had been introduced to the world by *Germinie Lacerteux* and *Thérèse Raquin*. In the name of socialist realism, ideas of decorum almost as strict as those of the time of Richelieu have governed official Russian criticism in its recent decisions as to what is and is not permissible in the depiction of Soviet life and character.

The disagreements among Italian and French neoclassic critics over *vraisemblance* grew out of inconsistencies in Aristotle's own doctrine,

but they had important contemporary reference. The critics of Corneille's time, partly for political reasons, were trying to give greater rationale to the distinction between history (what has happened), science (what can happen), and poetry (what should happen). In joining Aristotelian principles of probability and Horatian principles of decorum, they were not merely quibbling over rules and precedents. They were trying to see what kind of imaginative credibility and audience identification are necessary if a social art like the drama is to achieve its moral effect. For such purposes, as I. A. Richards said of poetic pseudo statement in *Science and Poetry*, " 'Truth' is primarily acceptability by some attitude, and more remotely is the acceptability of this attitude itself."

Aristotle's distinction between poetry and history is based on the superiority of types to individuals, of universals to particulars, of necessities to accidents, and has the same philosophic character as scholastic realism. Realistic fiction, on the other hand, "history" in the Aristotelian sense, was from the first much more nominalistic in character. Emphasizing particulars and individuals, things rather than names, Occamistic nominalism was the beginning of a break with mediaeval dogmatism and authoritarianism, with that churchly, hierarchal structuring of reality which absorbed the individual into the general and the general into the more general. Boccaccio was a younger contemporary of Occam, and his human comedy the *Decameron*, with its bourgeois materialism and individualism, the specific modernity of its social types and settings, its mocking, anti-idealist treatment of the institutions and beliefs of mediaevalism, represented a similar kind of break. De Sanctis in his *History of Italian Literature* somewhat exaggerated its effect, as the eighteenth-century English admirers of Cervantes exaggerated the effect of *Don Quixote*. The *Decameron* was, De Sanctis said, "a cataclysm, a revolution—one of those sudden revolutions that from one day to another show us a changed world."

Boccaccio's later successors, the *novellieri* of the sixteenth century, who developed his realism to such extremes, and who suggested so many plots to the Elizabethans, gave characteristic expression, in their short stories, to the social realities of the Italian Renaissance. But the antichivalric Spanish picaresque novel, which originated with *Lazarillo de Tormes* in the same century, went further toward a new form, a new genre. For now the attention, through a whole series of incidents, centers upon an individual who speaks for himself in the first person, an individual without social status or importance, who creates his own interest through will, wit, and resourcefulness, and through his wry discovery of the truths of a very unideal world.

The development of Occamist nominalism and individualism into

the scientific, empirical, sceptical tradition of Bacon, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume became the dominant trend in English philosophy for more than two centuries, and was very fully reflected in the parallel development of English fiction. Moreover, most English novelists in the development of realism from Nashe to Smollett were explicitly conscious of this general tendency, and of its relation to the problem of truth in fiction. They understood it as a historical development away from mediaevalism. In the *Anatomie of Absurditie* Nashe considered the unreality of the romances, in contrast to his own kind of writing, as a reactionary return to monkish mediaevalism and the superstitions of the banished Roman Church. "What els I pray you, doe these bable booke-mungers endevor but . . . to restore to the world that forgotten Legendary license of lying, to imitate a fresh the fantasticall dreames of those exiled Abbie-lubbers, from whose idle pens proceeded those worne out impressions of the feigned . . ."

Earlier, in the *Schoolmaster*, Ascham also complained of the chivalric romances "made in monasteries by idle monks or wanton canons: as one, for example 'Morte Arthur.'" But Ascham was even more disturbed by the current popularity of the Italian *novelle*. They shocked him as the French realistic novels were to shock Victorian critics three centuries later, and he blamed them on "subtle and secret Papists at home" who "procured bawdy books to be translated out of the Italian tongue, whereby over-many young wills and wits allured to wantonness do now boldly contemn all severe books that sound to honesty and godliness." The English translators themselves justified this literature, as did the original authors, on grounds of historical truth. Bandello had said that "these novels of mine (unless I am deceived by their narrators) are not fables but true histories." Introducing the *Palace of Pleasure*, Painter gave the authority of Cicero for preferring "the lively discourses of true histories" to "fained fables." And Fenton, in the dedication of his *Tragical Discourses*, stories taken through the French from Bandello, wrote: "And truly with better reason may a man put to the view of the world any ancient report whose profession is to declare a truth than to prefer the feigned tales of poets . . ."

Thomas Nashe offered his *Unfortunate Traveller, or the Life of Jack Wilton* as a "reasonable conveyance of historie," and, though the adventures in which he involved the Earl of Surrey were fictitious, he did attempt to give an eyewitness verisimilitude of detail to his accounts of Luther and other historic figures and of the Anabaptist rebellion and the social conditions of Rome. This documentation from histories and travelers' reports is presented as interesting in its own right, quite apart from the private adventures of the personable page who describes it all. It anticipates Defoe's mingling of history, journalism, and fiction

and, though it adds its share of hoaxes, misadventures, and low life, is very different in its historical-descriptive aspect from *Lazarillo* or the later *Guzmán de Alfarache*.

For his eighteenth-century English admirers it was Cervantes rather than Boccaccio or the picaresque writers who first brought fiction within the dominion of reality and common sense. Repeating Nashe's reference to the mediaeval church, Tobias Smollett said in the preface to *Roderick Random* that, "when the minds of men were debauched, by the imposition of priestcraft, to the most absurd pitch of credulity, the authors of romance arose, and, losing sight of probability, filled their performances with the most monstrous hyperboles." Cervantes, however, "by an inimitable piece of ridicule, reformed the taste of mankind, representing chivalry in the right point of view, and converting romance to purposes far more useful and entertaining, by making it assume the sock, and point out the follies of ordinary life."

Cervantes had said as much in his own preface to *Don Quixote*, which appeared the same year as Bacon's *Advancement of Learning*. His purpose was "to destroy the Authority and Acceptance the Books of Chivalry had had in the World, and among the Vulgar." In his anti-authoritarian break with tradition and precedent, Cervantes felt himself, like many of the later realists, to be making a completely fresh start. He could cite no precedents, for his subject was so "absolutely new, that neither Aristotle, St. Basil nor Cicero ever dreamt or heard of it." James Beattie, in 1783, in one of the earliest English histories of fiction, made Cervantes' achievement seem absurdly final. *Don Quixote* "no sooner appeared," he wrote in *On Fable and Romance*, "than chivalry vanished, as snow melts before the sun. Mankind awoke as from a dream" and fiction, "descending to the level of common life, conversed with man as his equal."

John Bunyan was a common man and wanted his fiction to speak to common men on their own level. Though he was not a man of letters in the way that Nashe and Cervantes were, he was quite as conscious of the problem of imagination and truth in fiction. In the rhymed preface to *Pilgrim's Progress*, he discussed his narrative technique, and defended his use of the "feigned" against accusations of unreality and lack of "solidness."

> Some men by feigned words as dark as mine,
> Make truth to spangle, and its rays to shine!

Bunyan, however, brought together romantic fantasy and common reality in a very different fashion from Cervantes. Insofar as what Beattie was later to call a "dream" represented the mythic realities of religion, Bunyan had no desire to wake mankind up. He wrote, in-

deed, "under the Similitude of a Dream." The dream vision, where laws of waking probability do not obtain, has been, from the prophets to the surrealists, the traditional means of conveying higher truths. Bunyan made the marvels of romantic quest literature part of everyman's inner experience. He taught the spiritual self-reliance and independence of Protestantism, but in the modes of mediaeval popular allegory, of *Piers Plowman* and the morality plays. In his prefaces Bunyan defended this parabolic method by the example of Holy Writ, which taught truth "by shadows, types and metaphors." But like popular mediaeval allegories and moralities, he described type characters and universal experiences with lower-class realism, especially in his treatment of social institutions. The "fierce powers of observation and rendering" of both Bunyan and Swift, Ford Madox Ford has said, carried them, despite themselves, "into the realms of realism."

Bunyan had, like so many other contributors to the development of realism, a distinct sense of being a formal innovator. He mentions his "novelty" of dialogue and treatment in his prefaces. And in some of the exemplary narratives in the *Life and Death of Mr. Badman*, in the case of Dorothy Mately, for instance, Bunyan cites names, dates, and places with a great show of historical accuracy. He includes the kind of homely circumstantial detail with which Defoe gave plausibility to *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal*, the kind of detail which no one but an artless eyewitness would think of reporting, but very different from the poetic marvels which made up the mediaeval saints' lives. In this Bunyan's work resembles the popular pamphlet literature of providential occurrences. In Aristotelian terms these occurrences were not poetic similitudes of universal experience, as in *Pilgrim's Progress*, but particular historic instances of divine intervention in individual lives. The more exactly documented the accounts seemed as history, the more likely they were to serve their exemplary purpose.

Mrs. Aphra Behn also tried in her novels to create the appearance of authentic history. Her purpose, of course, was totally different from that of Bunyan in *Pilgrim's Progress*. Where he justified the "feigned" because higher truth could only be expressed, in an almost Platonic sense, "by shadows, types and metaphors," Mrs. Behn, like Nashe, associated the "feigned" with romantic credulity. She felt as Congreve wrote in his preface to his novel *Incognita*, that the "lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances" of the romances convince us "'tis all a lye." The words *falsos* and *mentirosos* are common in *Don Quixote* in reference to the romances.

"I do not," Mrs. Behn said in the preface to the *Fair Jilt*, "pretend here to entertain you with a feign'd Story, or any Thing piec'd together with romantick Accidents; but every Circumstance, to a Tittle, is

Truth. To a great Part of the Main I myself was an Eye-witness; and what I did not see, I was confirm'd of by Actors in the Intrigue, Holy Men, of the Order of St. Francis." Though ready to use holy men as witnesses, Mrs. Behn shared Nashe's feeling about the monkish past. Moreover, her rationalist empiricism, however meager in its literary results, had a definitely scientific basis. Mrs. Behn translated Fontenelle's *History of Oracles and the Cheats of the Pagan Priests* and his *Theory or System of Several New Inhabited Worlds,* an early venture in scientific popularization. Perpetual secretary of the Académie des Sciences, freethinker, enemy of miracles and dogmatic abstraction, Fontenelle based all hope of progress on experimental science. Like Zola, nearly two centuries later, he wanted to make science include literature and art. In *Oroonoko* Mrs. Behn used travelers' accounts and perhaps her own experiences in Surinam to provide the kind of background detail which Defoe employed so much more extensively and successfully in *Robinson Crusoe.*

Defoe laid claim to historical truth in much the same terms as Mrs. Behn. "The world is so taken up of late with novels and romances," began the preface to *Moll Flanders,* "that it will be hard for a private history to be taken as genuine . . ." The freedom and particularity of the historic form permitted the developing realistic novel to assimilate a vast amount of social and natural fact before it joined the "kinds" and became subject to the rules of form and selection that govern art. With his Puritan earnestness, his love of projects, and his great talent for plausible lying, Defoe gave new "solidness," as Bunyan would say, to the rogue pamphlets, the *chroniques scandaleuses,* the popular biographies and tales of picaresque travel from which his narrative forms derive.

In his pamphleteering Defoe promoted the political theories of Locke, and showed a clear knowledge of economic realities. In his fiction he was influenced, not only by his own experiences as a reporter, gazetteer, and maker of government documents, but also by the new standards of accurate, inclusive observation in such works as Dampier's *Voyages.* As world trade expanded in the seventeenth century, practical information was more valued than romantic wonders in books of travel. William Dampier was a careful note taker and collector, a natural scientist whose *New Voyage* was dedicated to the president of the Royal Society. "These works of Dampier," William Eddy says, "represent the very height of realism, according to which things too remarkable, even though true, are omitted, lest the narrative be discredited."

Coleridge observed that Defoe had a sure sense of how far his audience could go in imaginative assimilation and identification. In *Robinson Crusoe,* Coleridge said, Defoe always knows how to subordinate

the lesser interest to the greater. If Crusoe had had Dampier's particular turn for natural history, or been less bungling in his carpentry or wheat growing, he would "cease to be the universal representative, the person for whom every reader could substitute himself."

As a universal representative, Robinson Crusoe becomes almost as allegorical a figure as Bunyan's Christian. Thus Defoe tries to describe him in the curiously ambiguous preface to *Serious Reflections*, signed by Crusoe himself and invoking the example of *Don Quixote* as an emblematic work. Answering the charges that his earlier adventures were romances, were "feigned," Robinson asserts again and again that the incidents actually happened, that the facts were "real" and "true." But it becomes evident that as "facts" they "really" happened elsewhere and to other people. Transferred and transposed, they are true only in an inner sense as metaphors, as "borrowed lights," to express the universal experience of solitude or isolation as Defoe had known it in prison, in politics, and in the bosom of his family. Defoe did not have Bunyan's moral realism and powers of spiritual dramatization. But he was able to make the Selkirk experience an emblem of solitude, of the good and bad aspects of individualism, and at the same time an expression of the colonizing energy, the commercial enterprise, and the delight in material accumulation of the English middle class.

Swift described Gulliver as the same simple, honest English mariner, the same common man, as Robinson. His preface to *Gulliver's Travels* and the accompanying letters and circumstantial details are wonderful parodies of the methods of authentication of Defoe and earlier writers of "true" novels. Swift had the same talent for plausibility or "lying" as Defoe, and exercised it with an ingenious show of factuality and specification in the *Modest Proposal*, the Bickerstaff pamphlets, and other *jeux d'esprit*. In the Scriblerus project and in "Polite and Ingenious Conversations," Swift made game of conventional, bourgeois *idées reçues* in much the spirit of the catalogue of such ideas which Flaubert developed into *Bouvard et Pécuchet*.

But most important, *Gulliver's Travels* established that connection between experimental science and the more repulsive or animal aspects of human behavior which Victorian critics associated with the French realists. It is true that Swift was making fun of scientific pretensions which Balzac and Zola, like Fontenelle, took seriously. Like the wits of the preceding century, he found irresistibly absurd the solemn experimental attention which the physiologists of the Royal Society gave to aspects of life which had always before been confined to the broadest folk comedy. Swift was writing in a traditional vein of gross humor which went back through Rabelais to the satyr plays, ironically reductive in its treatment of ideas, conventions, and institutions, unre-

strained by decorum in exploiting the trivial and incongruous, the scatological and the obscene. Yet, when he treated the scatological and gross with the solemnity, detachment, and specification of the new science, he managed at times to sound like *La Terre*.

The Royal Society was literally realistic in its emphasis on sensible objects, on things, not words, *Nullius in Verba* as its motto declared. In his *Ode* to the society, and in his essay on it, Cowley had definitely related the dogmas of that empty ghost Authority, which he said Bacon had banished, to the unreality of chivalric romance. Shadwell made a similar relation in the *Virtuoso*. The comedy begins with a passage from Lucretius, who was "no Trifling-Landskip-Poet, no Fantastick Heroick Dreamer, with empty Descriptions of Impossibilities, and mighty sounding Nothings." The title character, Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, was patterned on Robert Boyle, chief ornament of the Royal Society. There was not a creature so little "but afforded him great Curiosities" and, like Wordsworth, he made the world of nature, by "a noble kind of Prosopopeia, instruct Mankind." There is much talk about stinking flesh in the *Virtuoso*, the stinking flesh in which Claude Bernard was later to trace out impassively the living nerve, to Zola's admiration. Sir Nicholas's blood transfusions cast down the scale of nature, turn sheep into men and men into sheep. They are very different in implication from the transformations in Circe's palace. They prepare us not only for the subordination of Yahoos to Houyhnhnms but for the scientific comparison of man and animal which gave Balzac the theoretic basis for the *Comédie Humaine*.

Swift's satire on science in his account of the island of Laputa is less witty and sympathetic than Shadwell's. But, when Swift applied the precise observation of Dampier and the transactions of the Royal Society to the bodies of the Brobdingnagian maids of honor and to the excrementary habits of the Yahoos, he introduced into English fiction that gross fascination with images of ordure and bestiality which Tennyson attributed to the "realist" author in "Locksley Hall, Sixty Years After." Swift did this with relish, as we know from his poems. Both Pope and Swift, Dr. Johnson said, had an "unnatural delight in ideas physically impure." *Gulliver's Travels*, however, is far more serious philosophically than the *Virtuoso* or Butler's *Elephant in the Moon*. The Yahoos represent the *bête humaine* as he would actually be if he possessed only those qualities to which a doctrinaire naturalism attributes reality.

Gulliver's Travels is not a novel, of course; it is a philosophic imaginary voyage, given solidity by parody of the specifications of Dampier and Defoe. Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* is a novel, but it was not presented as such, any more than *Moll Flanders* was. Like *Robinson*

Crusoe and *Gulliver*, *Pamela* purports to be a documented true history. By nineteenth-century English critics, Defoe and Richardson were regularly named as the creators of the realistic novel. They were able to create it, perhaps, because they began their careers as workaday journalists, quite unaffected by classic forms and rules. In founding the English novel, Leslie Stephen said, Defoe and Richardson "appear to have stumbled upon their discovery by a kind of accident. As Defoe's novels are simply history *minus* the facts, so Richardson's are a series of letters *minus* the correspondents . . . The division between the art of lying and the art of fiction was not distinctly visible to either."

Both signed their novels "The Editor" and both had actually been editors of various genuine documents, the forms and materials of which they later brought into their fiction. Richardson had revised and printed some of Defoe's travel accounts and shared Defoe's voluminousness and passion for detail. Richardson's details, however, represent a very different kind of observation, more feminine, more psychological. He remarked in the postscript to *Clarissa* that "there was frequently a necessity to be very circumstantial and minute, in order to preserve and maintain that air of probability, which is necessary to be maintained in a story designed to represent real life . . ." Only to "un homme frivole et dissipé," Diderot said enthusiastically, could Richardson's details be displeasing, "toutes ces vérités de détail qui préparent l'âme aux impressions fortes des grands événements."

Shamela Andrews, as a mockery of the prudential morality of *Pamela*, was extremely coarse and realistic. But Fielding was not doing in *Shamela* what Cervantes and Jane Austen did in *Don Quixote* and *Northanger Abbey*. He was not bringing fictional conventions into comic conflict with the actualities of everyday life. Though Fielding's description of the externals of life was rougher, more masculine, more imagistic than Richardson's, the difference between them was more a matter of moral values than of representational realism. Fielding was not primarily interested in documentary or historical accuracy or even the appearance of it.

Though he called them "histories," Fielding was trying in *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones* to establish the novel as an imaginative form in its own right, and to distinguish it not only from the romance but also from history. Fielding had a low opinion both of ordinary history and of fiction which purported to be history, a true story borrowed "as the common method is, from authentic papers and records." Establishing the novel as a "kind," he applied to it the principles of the *Poetics*. That facts occurred, or were remarkable, or even all happened to one person, did not give them probability or unity or meaning. Biographers who copy nature, like Cervantes, Lesage, and Marivaux, have a higher

truth than that of fact. "In the work before us," Fielding said in *Joseph Andrews*, "I described not men but manners, not an individual, but a species . . . The lawyer is not only alive, but hath been so these four thousand years." And, though an author must observe probability, his characters and incidents need not "be trite, common, or vulgar; such as happens in every street, or in every house, or which may be met with in the home articles of a newspaper."

Both Richardson and Fielding claimed to have established a "new species of writing." Where Fielding used the concept of the comic epic, Richardson, with the help of some of his more scholarly friends like Young and Warburton, applied to his later works, *Clarissa* and *Grandison*, Aristotle's theories of tragedy, as interpreted by Rapin and Addison. In both cases truth was identified with the typical and the general rather than with the factual and particular. The separation from history had been clearly made. Diderot could say of Richardson what Fielding said of himself: "j'oserai dire que l'histoire la plus vraie est pleine de mensonges, et que ton roman est plein de vérités. L'histoire peint quelques individus; tu peins l'espèce humaine."

These contrasts of history and fiction, of types and individuals, now suddenly brought to bear upon criticism of the novel all those questions of realism and propriety which had agitated social criticism of the theater, and especially the comic theater, for a century or more. Comedy classically dealt with the ugly and imperfect, with faults and follies, with the actualities of contemporary life on the middle and lower levels. The Restoration playwrights interpreted this comic tradition according to an "inner decorum" of truth to kind which permitted their characters to act and talk with complete social realism. In his preface to Rochester's *Valentinian*, Robert Wolseley quoted Dryden's statement, "There is as much of Art and as near an imitation of Nature in a Lazar as in a Venus," and argued for a wide artistic freedom in the choice of objects imitated, as Henry James was to argue in his essay on Maupassant's realism in 1883. Collier's attack on the Restoration comedy, equally classical in argument, was based on an "outer decorum" required by the moral and exemplary function of the drama as a social form. To arouse delight in the immoral and the obscene was indecorous and untrue to nature. The ideas of Collier rather than those of Wolseley governed the new sentimental, idealizing drama which immediately preceded Richardson's and Fielding's creation of the formal novel.

The question of comedy and of comic types was ultimately philosophical, and had much the same basis as the opposition of idealism to realism in nineteenth-century English criticism of the novel. Tragedy dealth with historic individuals or with known legendary figures, but universalized and elevated them according to laws of poetic probability.

Comedy dealt not with individuals but with persisting types, and showed man as rather worse than he is, in its imitation of his faults and follies. Fielding's formula, "not men but manners, not an individual but a species," had been used almost verbatim by Ben Jonson and Molière, and was to be used again by Balzac in the *Chef d'œuvre inconnu* and in the preface to the *Comédie Humaine*. It goes back through the *commedia dell'arte* to the personae and masks of Latin and Greek comedy, and is closely related to Horatian ideas of truth to type and truth to nature.

But, if comedy deals with the base, the imperfect, the ludicrous, in what sense is it universal or true, if, to quote Butcher, "all ugliness, all imperfection, all evil itself, is an accident of nature, a derangement and disturbance by which things fall short of their true idea"? This problem came up in the *Parmenides* in relation to ideas of ludicrous or undignified or worthless things, of hair or mud or dirt, and made Socrates afraid of falling into an ocean of nonsense. The problem was very real for eighteenth-century theorists like Hurd, Lessing, and Diderot, and led them to an intensive analysis of the nature and representation of types in art, an analysis which makes E. M. Forster's distinction of flat and round characters seem very simple. Are types ideals, abstractions, or common or average forms? Are they pure products of the archetypal imagination, as Blake suggested, or are they developed empirically, as Balzac said, by a "combination of homogeneous characteristics"? When does a character become a caricature? If characters are individualized by having other traits "accidental" to their dominating quality or "humour," how mixed can they be and still remain types? What is the relation of character types to social or professional types? Is the mixed or pure character closer to "nature"?

These questions have a direct bearing on moral and psychological realism. Tom Jones, as a mixed, imperfect character, was in one sense thoroughly "natural," whereas Richardson had to defend Grandison against the charge that he "approaches too near the faultless character which critics censure as above nature." Samuel Johnson, however, praised Richardson, at times nearly as enthusiastically as Diderot, just because his characters were characters of "nature," whereas Fielding's were characters of manners. "Characters of manners are very entertaining; but they are to be understood by a more superficial observer, than characters of nature, where a man must dive into the recesses of the human heart."

In the *Preface to Shakespeare*, Johnson set up the idea of universal nature in opposition to the rigid class and type divisions of French neoclassic decorum. This emphasis on universality, however, made Johnson extremely unsympathetic to an empirical observation of accidents and

peculiarities. His generalizing bias was manifested, not only in his style and in the famous tulip passage of *Rasselas*, but also in his influence on Sir Joshua Reynolds. Reynolds became preoccupied in his theoretic discourses and in his own paintings with the problem of how idealized types could be concretely represented. He sought "nature" by eliminating the particular and accidental.

In 1865, in a chapter on "Idealism and Realism" in the *Principles of Success in Literature*, George Henry Lewes contrasted the idealism of Titian's "Peter the Martyr" with the "*detailism* which calls itself Realism." Reynolds made a basically similar contrast in his letters to the *Idler* in 1759. He said that the Dutch painted "Nature modified by accident," whereas the Italian school was concerned only with "the invariable, the great, and general ideas which are fixed and inherent in universal Nature." Johnson is said to have suggested the italicized words in Reynold's attack on detailism at the end of these letters: "By regarding minute particularities and accidental discrimination," Reynolds wrote, the painter will "deviate from universal rule, and *pollute his canvas with deformity*." Reynold's great rival and opposite, of course, was Hogarth, a lover of the homely and particular and a devoted social reformer. Fielding paid tribute to Hogarth in his discussions of the comic, and both Fielding and Smollett directly borrowed descriptive details from Hogarth's work.

No one was fonder of accidents and peculiarities than Lawrence Sterne, which is why Johnson was so emphatic in his declaration that "Nothing odd will do long. Tristram Shandy did not last." Sterne was still writing in the broad tradition of Rabelais, Cervantes, and Swift and, though he knew them well, flouted the rules of the dramatic and epic "kinds." In fact, he wrote with an experimental freedom of form which was not equalled, or even attempted, until the time of Joyce. Sterne extended the domain of the ridiculous to include imperfections of thought resulting from accidents of association of a very private and particular kind. Locke taught Sterne to observe the natural operations of the mind with the same "detailism" which Dampier, Defoe, and Swift had used for the world outside the mind.

In *Tristram Shandy*, as opposed to hierarchic, neoclassic ideas of probability and decorum, the associationism of Locke was made to sanction, with "Cervantic" irony, a kind of mental equalitarianism. In moments of deepest seriousness or most erudite thought, there is still room for the homely, the trivial, and the grotesque—unwound clocks, falling window sashes, hot chestnuts, and green satin nightgowns. In their existential interrelationship, the mental and physical are observed with equal particularity. When Tristram's father throws himself down on the bed in acute sorrow, we know the position of every limb and

joint; the nose sinks into the quilt, the left knuckles recline "upon the handle of the chamber-pot, which peeped out beyond the valance." The "old set-stitched chair, valanced and fringed around with party-coloured worsted bobs," in which Toby sits beside the bed, might well have been part of the furnishings of the Pension Vauquer.

Smollett was as much delighted as Sterne by the particularities and eccentricities of "originals." The scene of the wedding of Tabitha Bramble and Captain Lismahago is pure Hogarth in its "detailism." The characters of both Sterne and Smollett, however, in their pedantries and dominant humors or hobbies, are in the great classic tradition of character types. Smollett kept the looseness of form of the picaresque novel, and was able to include, therefore, a very wide range of observed reality. He inserted in *Peregrine Pickle* the more or less factual *chronique scandaleuse* of Lady Vane. *Humphry Clinker* uses long descriptions of the trade and agriculture of Scotland, taken almost verbatim from geographies Smollett had previously edited. Smollett was nearly as voluminous a reporter of social, political, and geographic fact as Defoe. His novels, moreover, conformed to the spirit of the picaresque, and before that the *novelle* and *fabliaux*, in their almost totally unideal view of the realities of social institutions. Picaresque fiction reflected the lives of antiheroes, of alienated men in the great cities of Europe after the breakup of the feudal order. Smollett's descriptions of men-of-war, prisons, madhouses, the slums of Edinburgh, and the balls of Bath are as concrete and unsentimental as any social documentation of nineteenth-century realism.

Smollett was a reformer, like Fielding and Hogarth, and a very courageous one. The three shared in the movement of institutional reform which grew steadily in England after the revelations about Fleet Prison in 1728. In this Dickens was their conscious disciple. Smollett practiced medicine, traveled widely, and had a keen, curious sense of the relation of milieu, physiology, and way of life to character. Though Smollett could hardly share the post-Darwinian determinism of Zola and Taine, much of *Humphry Clinker* comes as close as the *Zeitgeist* permitted to Zola's formula for naturalist description: "an account of the environment which determines and completes man." Matthew Bramble is preoccupied with health, diet, and sanitation. He travels to find his own proper milieu, and, in the wide variety of scenes his party visits, what he chiefly observes is the effect of environment on manners and morals. Matthew characteristically solves the spiritual problems of his friend Mr. Baynard by an energetic reordering of the practical economy of his life.

If objective realism is kept clearly separate from the philosophic and biologic assumptions of Zolaesque naturalism, then we can say that by

the time of *Humphry Clinker* the possibilities of realism had been pretty fully defined in England, both in critical theory and in fictional technique. Since the scope of this paper is necessarily limited, it remains only to see how the term itself came into use in the nineteenth century and to consider what sense of continuity with earlier realism its use implied. Actually, it is not a matter of the term, but of the termination, the *-ism*. "Real" had been constantly employed in earlier periods in making the conventional distinction between the novel and the romance. The new novel, Warburton said in 1751, is a "faithful and chaste copy of real LIFE AND MANNERS." Clara Reeve echoed him in 1785: "a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written . . . By its relation of such things as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves," it persuades us, she said, "that all is real."

"Real" was used in the same way in the first half of the nineteenth century, especially in reference to Defoe, Lesage, and the picaresque tradition. Though Defoe had been rather neglected critically in the preceding half-century, in the period of the "great quaternity," the romantics discussed him and reprinted him with warm interest. Lamb's friend Wilson wrote a life of Defoe which Hazlitt reviewed at length in the *Edinburgh Review*. Coleridge spoke of the "every day matter-of-fact *realness* which forms the charm and character" of all Defoe's romances. Scott compared him to the Flemish painters, and ascribed his charm "to the unequalled dexterity with which our author has given an appearance of REALITY to the incidents which he narrates."

Scott not only edited Defoe's works, but also reproduced *The Apparition of Mrs. Veal* entire in his *Lives of the Novelists*, so that he might analyze the art of circumstantiality, of doubts cast and doubts removed, of scoured silks and broken teacups, of "says I" and "thinks I," of "says he" and "thinks she," which give that classic ghost story its air of extreme plausibility. In such appreciation, Scott is a link between the realism of Balzac and the realism of Defoe. For it was Balzac's admiration for Scott's historical reconstructions, crowded with picturesque and homely details of the lives of all social classes, that inspired him, as he explains in the preface to the *Comédie Humaine*, to do something comparable for the society of contemporary France.

Scott also praised Jane Austen's sense of reality and analyzed her work as exemplifying the "new" novel. Though other novelists, he pointed out in a long review of *Emma*, had professed to imitate nature, "it was, as the French say, *la belle nature*." The new novel has "the art of copying from nature as she really exists in the common walks of life," of giving the reader "a correct and striking representation of that which is daily taking place around him."

Between the first two and the last two decades of the nineteenth century, there was amazingly little extended or serious discussion of the novel as a literary form, either by English critics or by the English novelists themselves. Thackeray's *British Humourists* is hardly an exception. But in such criticism as there was, the question of "reality" remained a central one. As in Daumier's cartoon, "Combat des écoles," the real in art was commonly contrasted with the ideal. In a review of Thackeray's work in the *North British Review*, in 1851, David Masson speaks of this contrast as already a cliché, but he uses the terms for want of better ones, and he refers to Hogarth and Reynolds as illustrating the distinction between them.

"Thackeray," Masson said, "is essentially an artist of the real school . . . Dickens, on the other hand, works more in the ideal." It is nonsense to say that Dickens' characters are lifelike. This is true not only of the tragic or sentimental creations but of the comic ones. "There never was a real Mr. Pickwick, a real Sam Weller, a real Mrs. Nickleby, a real Quilp, a real Micawber, a real Uriah Heep, or a real Toots, in the same accurate sense that there has been or might be a real Major Pendennis, a real Captain Costigan, a real Becky, a real Sir Pitt Crawly, and a real Mr. Foker." Dickens' characters, he said, are "transcendental renderings of certain hints furnished by nature." And he made the same distinction between the mixed characters of Thackeray (like Pendennis) and the ideally perfect or ideally detestable characters of Dickens that eighteenth-century critics had made between the characters of Fielding and Richardson. In a letter to Masson, Thackeray accepted the distinction, but denied that this meant that Dickens' was the higher art, holding, as he did, "that the Art of Novels is to represent Nature: to convey as strongly as possible the sentiment of reality."

Two years later, in 1853, the *Westminister Review*, of which George Eliot was an assistant editor, ran a long and informed article on "Balzac and his Writings," in which the word "realism" is used and carefully defined. Balzac's realism is related to the earlier English realism of Defoe and Richarson. This was three years before the first instances of the word cited in the *NED*. "Realism," the *Westminster* said, "is confounded with materialism by writers who have never been able to distinguish between classicism and conventionalism, and is represented as being the art of copying external nature with correctness, when analysis of human character and motives, and the observation of mental phenomena, form the very foundation of the system."

David Masson had added *-ist* and *-ism* to *real* by the time he published *British Novelists and Their Styles* in 1859. "It is in the true spirit of a realist," he says, "that Defoe, though he is usually plain and prosaic, yet, when the facts to be reported are striking or horrible, rises easily to

their level." He attributes to Thackeray's example the "growth among our novel-writers of a wholesome spirit of Realism." He finds among the new realists a disposition to seek out facts and characters beyond the range of their own easy observation, an indifference to traditional ideas of beauty, and a "willingness to accept, as worthy of study and representation, facts and objects accounted common, disagreeable, or even painful."

The novel in its totality, Masson says, has become a kind of natural history of British life, and, since political and psychological facts, unlike those of botany or mineralogy, rapidly change, naturalism in art (he uses this term) has become, since 1848, preoccupied with social change and even social disorder, with "political conspiracies, club-meetings, strikes in the manufacturing districts, mill riots, etc.... If the Real is to be represented in Novels, are not Puseyism, Socialism, Positivism, etc., among the last buddings of the Real? Deep, indeed, in the present time, might the art of the Realist go, if the Realist had courage to be what he pretends." The radical positivist who went deepest in her art, of course, was George Eliot, whose *Adam Bede*, warmly greeted by Masson, came out earlier in the same year, 1859. George Eliot described her own art very much as Scott described that of Jane Austen. "It is for this rare, precious quality of truthfulness," she wrote in *Adam Bede*, "that I delight in many Dutch paintings which lofty-minded people despise... these faithful pictures of a monotonous homely existence." In his *Le Roman naturaliste*, in 1883, Brunetière devoted a whole chapter, "Le Naturalisme anglais," to the work of George Eliot.

From 1859 on, the terms "realism" and "realist" were commonly used in a favorable or neutral sense in discussions of the English novel. Meredith said in a letter in 1864 that "between realism and idealism there is no natural conflict." In the *Principles of Success in Literature* (1865) George Henry Lewes tried to reconcile the two principles in a chapter called "Idealism and Realism." In the first volume of *Hours in a Library* (1874) Leslie Stephen used "realism" favorably, ascribing, for instance, to Defoe "the vigour naturally connected with an unflinching realism." In his *Autobiography* (1883) Trollope said, "The Novelists who are considered to be anti-sensational are generally called realistic. I am realistic. My friend Wilkie Collins is generally supposed to be sensational."

The distinction between the realistic novelists—Jane Austen, Thackeray, George Eliot—and the sensational—Dickens, Wilkie Collins, Charles Reade—had been generally recognized by reviewers and by the sensational novelists themselves. The sensational novelists combined melodrama with careful social documentation, and their principal incidents were often based on actual events. In a kind of manifesto at the

beginning of *Basil* (1852) Collins said, "I have not thought it either politic or necessary, while adhering to realities, to adhere to every-day realties only"; and Reade said, in the *Autobiography of a Thief* (1858), "I feign probabilities; I record improbabilities. The former are conjectures, the latter truths; mixed they make a thing not so true as gospel, not so false as history—viz. fiction."

The differences between the two schools involved questions that had been raised and defined in the eighteenth century and before, the questions of the probable common and the possible uncommon, of idealization and elevation, of indecorous themes and materials, of pure and mixed characters, of poetic justice, and of dramatic effects of climax and catastrope. But in the mid-nineteenth century in England these questions were not discussed with depth, amplitude, or sense of continuing literary tradition. "Indeed," Henry Norman said, as late as 1883, "we shall look in vain to any Englishman for a discussion of the theories of fiction."

Partly as a result of this lack, and partly because of the shocking sexuality of the new French novel, the great flood of journalistic articles on realism in England in the late 1870s and early 1880s discussed realism largely in terms of French theory and French practice; the reaction to the novel of Zola, Maupassant, and the Goncourts was intensely national, moralistic, and even, in the manner of Roger Ascham, Protestant. Often "realism" and "naturalism" were not distinguished. When they were, the distinction was conveniently illustrated by the examples of Balzac and Zola. W. S. Lilly, in 1885, opposed the idealism, as he thought, of Balzac's *Chef-d'œuvre inconnu* to Zola's refusal to recognize in nature anything which cannot be "analyzed, or dissected, or vivisected." Oscar Wilde, in 1886, said the distinction between *L'Assommoir* and *Les Illusions perdues* was between "unimaginative realism and imaginative reality."

In a sensible article called "The Limits of Realism," first published in 1893, Edmund Gosse described many of the theories of *Le Roman expérimental* as commonplaces, fully exemplified in earlier English fiction. Miss Austen, he said, "is the perfection of the realistic ideal, and there ought to be statue of her in the vestibule of the forthcoming *Académie des Goncourts.*" Gosse, however, used the terms "naturalist," "realist," and "experimental" interchangeably and, with French fiction still primarily in mind, made some curious assignments of priority. The only "experimental or realistic novel" in England, he said, had been written by George Moore. "In America, where now almost every new writer of merit seems to be a realist, there was but one, Mr. Henry James, who, in 1877, had inaugurated the experimental novel in the English language, with his *American.*"

This restrictive and perhaps unhistorical sense of "realism" still obtained in the *Cambridge Bibliography of English Literature* in 1941. The single reference for "Realism" in the General Index leads to a meager list of French and English works in Volume III. Only four English novelists are included, Charles Reade, George Moore, George Gissing, and "Lucas Malet." Though the earliest English novel listed is Charles Reade's *Griffith Gaunt* (1866), a "Tale of instinct, jealousy and passion in realistic circumstances," George Moore's *A Modern Lover* (1883) is declared, on the authority of Arnold Bennett, to be "the first example of English realism."

After 1895, however, when scholars finally began to devote themselves to the history of English fiction, "realism," in the sense in which David Masson and Leslie Stephen had used it, became indispensable as a neutral descriptive term, and has remained pretty well fixed in academic usage ever since. It has remained fixed, perhaps, because its general use coincided with a decline of interest in realism as a movement or idea. The use of realistic techniques and subject matter became increasingly common, became a convention even in fantasy, and reached what seems a final limit in Joyce's *Ulysses*, both in the matter represented and in the "detailism" of the representation.

The science, politics, and psychology of the twentieth century has carried the literary mind very far from the rational empiricism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. What is interesting is not so much the faithful reproduction of actuality as such, but the meaning given it by the formal, imaginative pattern of the work of art. James' essays on novelists were much concerned with reality but they showed how each novelist's sense of reality constitutes a particular artistic "case." To critics fascinated by the symbolic ambiguities of Kafka and Melville, the writing of Defoe and Smollett, of Fielding and Richardson, is unsatisfying, cut off, as it seems, from the realities of the unconscious and the mythic. The combination of realistic surface and symbolic form in the richest twentieth-century fiction restores a Coleridgean sense of the reconciling powers of the imagination, an appreciation of the unique powers of the work of art to represent several orders of reality at once. But even so it is doubtful if contemporary criticism of fiction, after the critical hiatus of the nineteenth century, has quite found itself again in the classic Aristotelian tradition. With so much more knowledge and so much more material to work on, it has not carried much further, at least in any philosophic or systematic sense, that study of the meaning of universals of action and character in fiction which was so well begun by critics in the eighteenth century.

Smith College

L'ESSENCE DU RÉALISME FRANÇAIS

ALBERT J. SALVAN

IL Y A cent ans environ qu'avec le manifeste de Courbet,[1] la doctrine réaliste a pris en France une forme définie. C'est Baudelaire, cependant, qui a sans doute donné la meilleure définition du réalisme quand il prête à un porte-parole fictif de l'école positiviste la déclaration suivante: "Je veux représenter les choses telles qu'elles sont, ou bien qu'elles seraient, en supposant que je n'existe pas."[2] Quelques questions ne peuvent manquer de se présenter à l'esprit du lecteur. Etant donné qu'il est d'un usage courant d'associer le réalisme au caractère, au tempérament, et à l'art français en général, pour quelles raisons une tendance prétendue nationale ne s'installe-t-elle au premier plan de la scène littéraire que vers le milieu du dix-neuvième siècle? D'autre part, une fois que le réalisme a conquis droit de cité, dans quelle mesure les prosateurs modernes, et tout particulièrement les romanciers, ont-ils tendu vers cette esthétique telle qu'elle a été formulée par Baudelaire? Le but que nous nous proposons dans cette étude est précisément de répondre à ces questions.

Si c'est un trait de caractère du Français que d'aimer la littérature romanesque, il en est un autre non moins important qui consiste à ne point vouloir être dupe. Si l'on ajoute qu'à ces traits il joint les habituelles préoccupations du moraliste, qu'il se pose continuellement les questions: "Qu'est-ce que l'homme? Dans quel monde vit-il? Quelle est sa destinée?"—on trouvera peut-être surprenant que tant de siècles aient passé avant que ne fût formulée, et l'on sait avec quelles réserves,[3] la définition de Baudelaire.

---

[1] Dans quelque lignes intitulées *Le Réalisme*, qui accompagnaient le catalogue de l'exposition de 1885 où Courbet mettait en vente 40 tableaux et 4 dessins, le peintre définissait ainsi son programme: être personnel, c'est-à-dire dégager son individualité par l'étude assidue des anciens et des modernes; puis être moderne, c'est-à-dire traduire les mœurs, les idées et l'aspect de son époque selon son appréciation.

[2] Baudelaire, "Du gouvernement de l'imagination," *Curiosités esthétiques* (Paris, Conard, 1923), p. 284.

[3] "Réaliste... mot à double entente et dont le sens n'est pas bien déterminé," *ibid.*; en 1857, Baudelaire considère ce terme "une injure dégoûtante jetée à la face de tous les analystes," "*Madame Bovary*, par Gustave Flaubert," *L'Art romantique* (Paris, Conard, 1925), p. 399.

S'il s'agissait seulement de la nécessité dans laquelle se trouve l'œuvre d'art de rappeler le monde physique, il faudrait admettre que l'évocation du réel date de bien avant la littérature française. Si l'on admet que la théorie du réalisme consiste dans le fait qu'un plaisir esthétique peut être créé par l'évocation artistique de sensations ou d'images, lesquelles seraient déplaisantes si elles étaient éprouvées ou perçues en réalité, on trouvera qu'Homère est déjà un réaliste. D'autre part, si l'on accepte que l'effacement de soi de la part de l'auteur, même quand il décrit des scènes immorales, est une condition suffisante, le *Satyricon* de Pétrone suffirait pour faire passer *l'arbitre des élégances* dans le camp des naturalistes. Dans la littérature française cependant, il semble que se développe au cours des siècles et sous des formes variées une tendance qui tire son origine d'un trait de caractère français. C'est la tendance qui consiste à opérer un retour soudain à une réalité grossière dans un contraste voulu avec une littérature que le rêve a par trop séparée de la vie. Au moyen âge, par exemple, par réaction contre des idéals héroïques ou courtois dans lesquels le public a cessé de se reconnaitre, on trouve une sorte de caricature de leurs excès. Un trait qu'il importe de signaler, c'est qu'à une littérature aristocratique, les fabliaux opposent des œuvres composées par des bourgeois à l'usage des bourgeois. Quant à l'extrême brutalité qui s'y déploie, c'est un reflet des mœurs de l'époque et une source de comique populaire dont la postérité n'a pas oublié la formule. Si l'on ajoute à ces traits la satire contre les prêtres, contre les femmes, et contre les puissants en général, on se rend compte que ce réalisme a déjà un caractère de littérature d'opposition qui s'accentuera au cours des siècles suivants.

Entre la poésie épique et le grossier fabliau, n'y aurait-il pas de juste milieu? Peut-être, si tout en tenant compte de la dimension du temps, nous voyons dans Villon le représentant d'un lyrisme bourgeois dont les évocations attendries ou macabres produisent chez le lecteur cet effet de joie esthétique qui est le vrai signe du succès artistique.

Il n'est pas dans nos intentions de retracer ici l'évolution du réalisme en France. Nous voudrions seulement attirer l'attention sur son rôle de contrepartie, d'antidote, si l'on veut, ou bien de synthèse de deux mouvements opposés, jusqu'au moment où il se formulera en tant que doctrine avant de s'imposer en tant que méthode. Toujours est-il qu'au seizième siècle, alors que le Pantagruélisme s'oppose au Platonisme, Montaigne représente la forme de sagesse qui accepte le double principe que tout homme est l'image de la condition humaine tout en étant incapable de sortir de lui-même. Au dix-septième siècle, le burlesque s'oppose au genre romanesque et à la préciosité tandis que le *vrai*, préconisé par Boileau, se dégage irrésistiblement de la claire densité des dramaturges classiques.

Dans un temps fidèle aux dogmes fondés sur la tradition, on ne peut guère s'attendre à trouver des signes avant-coureurs bien nets du réalisme tel que nous l'entendons. Il y a bien les recommandations de Scudéry dans la préface d'*Ibrahim*. L'auteur y suggère l'emploi d'aventures "naturelles," et conseille d'observer "les mœurs, les coutumes, les lois, les religions et les inclinations des peuples."[4] On ne peut guère voir dans ces avis la doctrine systématique d'une littérature calquée sur le réel, mais plutôt l'application au roman d'un principe fort simple et d'une recette efficace. Pour donner à une fiction un air de vraisemblance, il faut que l'auteur y mette assez de vérité pour que le lecteur reconnaisse dans certains épisodes du récit une part d'expérience personnelle, ainsi qu'une relation de cause à effet qui lui soit familière. Si ces conditions sont remplies, il fera confiance au romancier quand celui-ci l'entraînera en terrain moins sûr. L'art de cette époque est en effet fondé sur une identité prétendue qui existerait entre les lois qui gouvernent le monde et celles qui régissent le domaine de l'art. Les règles et les bienséances empêchaient de percevoir la solution de continuité qui sépare l'art de la vie.

Vers la fin du dix-septième siècle, à l'admiration de la nature autrefois préconisée par Montaigne: "Nature est un doux guide, mais pas plus doux que prudent et juste," s'étaient adjoints l'examen et l'analyse de celle-ci pour des fins scientifiques. Ces recherches devaient se cristalliser au dix-huitième siècle sous diverses formes. L'une d'elles fut le panthéisme matérialiste de Diderot. L'auteur du *Rêve de d'Alembert* fut en effet le premier à voir entre les hommes, les animaux et les choses, des liens si étroits qu'on ne pouvait étudier les uns sans accorder quelque attention aux autres, sous peine d'encourir l'accusation d'injustice ou d'ignorance. Dans un matérialisme qui voit dans la pensée une propriété de la vie, et dans la vie une propriété générale de la matière, il est hors de doute que se trouve établie la base de la théorie de Taine suivant laquelle la psychologie ne serait qu'un chapitre de la physiologie.[5] D'après Diderot, puisque le monde est régi par des causes physiques, ce doit être suivant des lois dont l'étude peut révéler les principes. Pour toucher, émouvoir et instruire le public, il ne s'agit donc pas de se conformer à des règles d'esthétique, mais plutôt de se familiariser avec ces lois par l'expérience, et de reproduire cette expérience le plus fidèlement possible. On voit les conséquences de ces idées. L'importance du fait vrai compliquera la question du choix en ne permettant l'élimination logique d'aucun élément sous prétexte qu'il

[4] Cité par Philippe Van Tieghem, *Petite histoire des doctrines littéraires en France* (Paris, 1946), p. 25.

[5] Voir Charles Beuchat, *De Restif à Flaubert ou le Naturalisme en marche* (Paris, 1939), p. 32.

ne se prête pas à une œuvre d'art, la recherche de principes directeurs tendra à rendre impersonnels les résultats de ces expériences, et enfin le souci de la vérité tendra à ramener l'artiste à l'étude du présent.

Si Diderot a engagé le réalisme dans la voie de l'expérience vécue, sentie et pensée, les Idéologues de la fin du dix-huitième siècle et du début du dix-neuvième lui ont assuré une base philosophique qu'allait couronner le positivisme d'Auguste Comte. En faisant de la sensibilité la source des idées, en montrant que cette sensibilité varie suivant les tempéraments individuels, en insistant sur l'analyse comme moyen de recherche, en décrivant l'évolution des idées de génération à génération, non seulement ils préparaient les éléments qu'allait coordonner Auguste Comte dans son positivisme, mais encore ils allaient influencer Stendhal et Balzac, les pères du réalisme français.[6] Par ailleurs, de même que par le culte du fait ils préparaient la critique de Taine, par leur dédain pour les règles de la critique classique quand ils jugent une œuvre littéraire, ainsi que par leur extrême souci des effets psychologiques de celle-ci, ils présagent la morale en action de Zola.

Pour certains historiens de la littérature, Pierre Martino entre autres, le romantisme n'a été qu'une interruption partielle du courant de philosophie positive, courant dont il n'a pas détruit les principes.[7] Pour d'autres, au nombre desquels figure Philippe Van Tieghem, c'est dans le romantisme qu'il faut chercher les germes du réalisme.[8] L'introduction du concret dans l'art, du familier dans le langage, du documentaire dans l'exotisme, de la méthode historique dans la critique littéraire, ont évidemment préparé le terrain pour les auteurs réalistes. Un autre apport qu'il ne faut pas négliger est le caractère d'actualité que le romantisme a tenté de communiquer à la littérature. Cette actualité avait pour condition l'abandon des règles admises. Il est donc curieux de constater que l'affranchissement du roman et des lettres en général a contribué à l'installation et au triomphe momentané du déterminisme matérialiste de la doctrine naturaliste. Malgré sa foi dans une logique héritée des Idéologues, Stendhal ne manque pas toutefois de laisser une part d'imprévu dans le comportement de ses personnages. Balzac ne permet pas à son goût du détail précis d'entraver son intuition. Tous deux pourtant ont aidé le réalisme à se détacher du romantisme. Stendhal formule avec sobriété ses observations, ses théories et les lois qui en découlent. Balzac veut faire du romancier un savant et un philosophe. Lui-même en particulier revendique le titre d'historien des mœurs. En somme, du dix-septième siècle au dix-neuvième, les écrivains français ont passé de la conception d'un art détaché de la vie à celle d'un art qui

[6] Voir Emile Cailliet, *La Tradition littéroire des Idéologues* (Philadelphia, 1943).

[7] Pierre Martino, *Le Naturalisme français* (Paris, 1945), pp. 6 et suiv.

[8] Van Tieghem, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

devrait faire partie de celle-ci. C'est à la découverte de l'erreur de cette dernière conception, erreur qu'accompagna la création d'authentiques chefs-d'œuvre, que sera consacrée la deuxième partie de cette étude.

Lorsque sous la pression de conditions extérieures ou intérieures, un pays se met à suivre une politique dite "réaliste," il est presque inévitable que des transformations profondes soient effectuées dans l'administration de ce pays. Des hommes d'état codifient celles-ci et en font un système de lois que plus tard ils sont tentés d'imposer par la diplomatie ou par la force aux pays environnants. Puis, sous l'effet d'une pression extérieure accompagnée ou non d'une désagrégation interne, l'ensemble se fragmente ou tout au moins se modifie sensiblement. Dans l'espèce, une série de phénomènes analogues peut s'observer en littérature vers le milieu du dix-neuvième siècle. Le réalisme, procédé littéraire et moyen d'opposition, s'est transformé en une formule d'esthétique, puis s'est soumis à des lois qu'imposaient ses théoriciens avant de devenir un agent de réformes sociales. Cette doctrine atteint un point culminant et prend un nom. Comme d'une part le travail d'équipe est incompatible avec l'art et que, d'autre part, le public ne pardonne pas l'échec, le mouvement se résorbe tout en laissant des traces profondes qui prennent des formes variées.

Nous avons vu que la philosophie rationaliste et antireligieuse du dix-huitième siècle s'était maintenue malgré l'interruption du romantisme. Par ailleurs, le besoin de croire en quelque chose avait pris la forme d'une mystique de la science et du progrès matériel. Ce progrès devait s'accompagner de graves problèmes sociaux et la révolution de 1848 allait opposer ouvriers et bourgeois dans une lutte dont l'issue momentanée fut le Second Empire.

Il est à remarquer que c'est dans le domaine de la peinture que le réalisme attire d'abord l'attention, et que le premier article de la revue intitulée *Le Réalisme* avait été écrit par Duranty sur la peinture.[9] En littérature, c'est entre 1843 et 1857 que Champfleury expose sa doctrine. Dans l'ensemble, il borne ses théories aux simples questions d'esthétique. Il y préconise la contrepartie systématique des défauts romantiques. Selon lui, il faut faire disparaître du roman les personnages exceptionnels ou monstrueux au profit de l'homme ordinaire. Que cet homme soit beau ou laid, vertueux ou criminel importe peu, pourvu qu'il soit vrai. A une rhétorique creuse, Champfleury opposera la langue la plus sobre, celle qui se fondra le mieux avec le sujet de l'œuvre; au lyrisme et à l'effusion personnelle, il désire substituer l'impersonnalité et l'effacement de l'auteur, tandis que le désir de persuader sera remplacé par l'attitude la plus neutre. Pour Champfleury, le génie de l'écrivain con-

[9] Edmond Duranty, "Notes sur l'art," *Réalisme*, 19 juillet 1846; voir Bernard Weinberg, *French Realism: The Critical Reaction* (New York, 1937), p. 97.

sisterait à faire de son livre un miroir de la vie, un appareil enregistreur impeccable des sons, des couleurs et des formes. L'auteur, abandonnant son être propre, devrait s'insinuer dans chacun de ses personnages pour en jouer le rôle fidèlement dans un complet effacement de lui-même. Pour satisfaire la curiosité du public et la soif de vérité dont il est altéré (on voit par cette croyance que Champfleury est resté romantique par certains côtés), le romancier devra devenir une sorte d'encyclopédiste et "ne rien ignorer des tendances scientifiques et morales de son époque." Par ailleurs, Champfleury reconnait qu'il existe un autre type d'écrivain auquel il suffit de se tourner vers ses souvenirs pour en extraire "grâce à la réalité" un livre qui restera vivant: c'est le romancier personnel.[10]

"Tout l'univers visible, a écrit Baudelaire, n'est qu'un magasin d'images et de signes auxquels l'imagination donnera une place et une valeur relative; c'est une espèce de pâture que l'imagination doit digérer et transformer."[11] Il est curieux que Champfleury, ami du poète, n'ait pas compris que ce principe, émis au sujet de la peinture, s'appliquait également aux ouvrages de fiction. Il est vrai que s'il ne l'a pas incorporé dans sa doctrine, il n'a pu s'empêcher d'en faire l'application dans ses romans. S'il n'en était pas ainsi, Baudelaire n'aurait pas parlé du binocle "plus poétique qu'il ne le croit lui-même" de Champfleury.[12] Ce caractère poétique ne frappe guère le lecteur moderne que par un exotisme dans le temps dû à l'évocation fidèle de types provinciaux et de leurs coutumes vers 1830.

Si l'on ajoute aux théories de Champfleury cette distinction qu'apporte Xavier Aubryet dans l'*Artiste*,[13] que si l'auteur réaliste ne choisit pas au point de vue humain, car toute réalité est digne d'être reproduite, il doit choisir au point de vue de l'art, puisque le choix est la condition de tout art, nous nous trouvons en présence d'une doctrine sinon parfaitement logique (comment en effet supprimer le moi humain d'un art qui reste basé sur le choix individuel?), tout au moins conséquente avec elle-même. Comme, par ailleurs, il est impossible à notre avis d'établir un corps de lois sans que se présente la tentation de le faire agir en dehors de son domaine propre, on ne tarde pas à vouloir codifier la culture du vrai pour la rendre utile en lui attribuant un rôle didactique, surtout dans son application aux rapports de l'homme avec la société.

Dans *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert a engagé le roman dans une voie bien différente. Il est évident que pour lui, tout utilitarisme était con-

[10] Champfleury, "Encore quelques mots à propos de *M. de Boisdhyver*," *Figaro*, 7 août 1856, cité par B. Weinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 122.

[11] Baudelaire, *Curiosités esthétiques*, p. 283.

[12] Baudelaire, *L'Art romantique*, p. 397.

[13] Xavier Aubryet, "Revue parisienne. M. Champfleury," *L'Artiste*, 9 novembre 1856, cité par B. Weinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

traire aux fins de tout art digne de ce nom. L'art étant une fin en soi, il a présenté sous la forme la plus impersonnelle qu'il ait pu réaliser le conflit qui opposait son propre romantisme au réalisme de son temps. Dans l'abîme qui sépare Emma des êtres qui l'entourent, on peut voir ainsi que bien d'autres choses l'opposition irréductible qui existe entre la vie telle qu'on la vit et celle dont l'art fait la représentation. Le dynamisme de cette lutte qu'engage l'artiste avec la matière de son œuvre est par ailleurs figé par un style que Jean Prévost a décrit comme "la plus singulière source pétrifiante de notre littérature."[14] Qu'on ne se laisse pas tromper toutefois par cette immobilité. Il se peut que l'âme du romancier ne se laisse pas déceler facilement, mais, comme Prévost le dit aussitôt après : "une source pleure sous ce marbre."[15]

Bien plus que les théories de Champfleury, et malgré l'hostilité que montra le journal de Duranty envers le roman, c'est la publication de *Madame Bovary* qui assura le triomphe du réalisme en France. Le procès intenté à l'auteur consacra en effet l'étiquette de réaliste qui est restée appliquée au roman. Un tel titre se justifie du fait que Flaubert a prétendu atteindre au "réel écrit" dans cet ouvrage. Est-ce à dire qu'il aurait seulement consigné dans *Madame Bovary* le résultat d'une exploration minutieuse de son propre esprit jointe aux fruits d'une observation du monde extérieur à la fois exacte et complète? Il n'en est certes pas ainsi et le lecteur n'a guère besoin de l'affirmation de Flaubert maintes fois citée : "Emma Bovary c'est moi," pour reconnaître dans ce personnage une caricature du romantisme de son créateur. Baudelaire a été l'un des premiers à voir dans Emma un caractère qui par son énergie, par ses ambitions et par ses rêves était un homme.[16] En second lieu, de nombreuses recherches sur la méthode de travail de Flaubert et sur la documentation du roman ont amplement démontré que l'imagination, dans le sens populaire du terme, c'est-à-dire celui de fantaisie déréglée, n'a joué qu'un rôle bien minime dans la conception et dans l'exécution du livre. Les modèles de presque tous les personnages ont été identifiés, même lorsque suivant la méthode habituelle des romanciers, plusieurs individus ont servi à la création d'un seul personnage. On sait quels ouvrages Flaubert a consultés afin de se renseigner sur l'opération d'un pied bot et sur les effets de l'arsenic. Les principes qui sont à la base de son style sont également connus ainsi que la hantise qui lui est propre d'unir le fond et la forme d'un livre dans un ensemble qui rende justice à la fois à l'art et à la nature. L'esthétique du romancier devient encore plus nette dans notre esprit quand on considère sa déclaration bien connue : "Un livre n'a jamais été pour moi qu'une

[14] Jean Prévost, Introduction, *Problèmes du roman* (Paris, 1943), p. 21.
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] Baudelaire, *L'Art romantique*, p. 401.

manière de vivre dans un milieu quelconque." En effet, pour écrire un roman tel que *Madame Bovary*, non seulement faut-il que l'auteur opère un transfert de personnalité mais encore il faut que sa vie matérielle disparaisse de son point de vue au profit du monde qu'il crée. Dans l'alternative qui, selon Jean-Paul Sartre, se présente à l'homme de vivre ou de raconter,[17] Flaubert a fait son choix. Quant aux procédés qu'il mettra en œuvre pour effectuer sa création, ils dériveront de la "sorcellerie évocatoire" du style. Celui-ci ne dépendra pas seulement de la technique que par exemple révèlent les "états" successifs du manuscrit de *Madame Bovary*. C'est plutôt la création pièce par pièce d'un monde autre que le nôtre et dont l'auteur a la vision intérieure. Et si le lecteur reconnaît ce monde, comme il finit toujours par le reconnaître dans toute œuvre d'art qui est conforme à la personnalité profonde de l'artiste, c'est que ce monde est gouverné par les mêmes lois de cause à effet qui régissent le sien.

Malgré la prétention d'avoir fait du "réel écrit" que nous avons notée précédemment, Flaubert n'a pu empêcher qu'une impitoyable ironie se dégage de *Madame Bovary*; mais c'est cette espèce d'ironie de la vérité qui fait de l'auteur à la fois la victime et le bourreau de lui-même. Dans l'exploration minutieuse de son propre esprit, aussi bien que dans l'évocation du monde extérieur, Flaubert se soumet à ses propres lois. Quand il transpose le besoin d'absolu qui dévore Emma Bovary sous la forme d'un romantisme absurde, ou quand il fait parler Homais, son lecteur se trouve dans un monde où le créateur est également présent et souffre avec son personnage principal. Et quand le pharmacien de Yonville, se livrant à ses discours habituels, flétrit la croyance aux miracles, "choses absurdes en elles-mêmes et complètement opposées aux lois de la physique," on peut trouver là non seulement une attaque contre un petit bourgeois voltairien, mais aussi la critique de l'attitude d'esprit d'où est issu le réalisme.

S'il n'a jamais cru que l'on pouvait assimiler l'art à la science, Flaubert n'en a pas moins contribué dans une large mesure à l'avènement du naturalisme en France. Son souci d'une documentation complète, aussi bien que la composition de son roman, suffisent à prouver qu'il applique scrupuleusement les principes d'un déterminisme intransigeant. Ce sont pourtant les Goncourt qui, avec *Germinie Lacerteux*, ont fourni le modèle que dans ses grandes lignes les naturalistes ne se sont pas fait faute d'imiter. Une héroïne provenant des basses classes de la société, un cadre sordide dont les auteurs font ressortir l'étrange poésie, le caractère scientifique, clinique si l'on veut, de la destruction de Germinie sous le double effet de son tempérament et de son milieu, voilà qui préparait directement le terrain pour la *Thérèse Raquin* de

[17] Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée* (Paris, 1950), p. 61.

Zola. En outre, une préface d'un ton délibérément agressif revendiquait déjà les droits qu'avait un auteur de fiction aux privilèges du savant, puisque le romancier acceptait de se soumettre à la discipline de la science.

L'échec du roman auprès du grand public tient peut-être à la finesse de perception des Goncourt et à leur désir de communiquer au lecteur les impressions les plus subtiles. Or, malgré l'admirable documentation qu'avaient recueillie les deux frères, l'exotisme des bas-fonds de *Germinie Lacerteux* restait d'un accès difficile. L'impressionnisme et le réalisme ne sont guère compatibles que si l'auteur entraîne le lecteur dans le monde de sa création grâce à un style relativement simple, à la force de son génie poétique, à des symboles faciles à interpréter, à une puissance de vitalité communicative, parfois grâce à la réunion de plusieurs de ces éléments. Par surcroît, les Goncourt violaient le code du roman réaliste en dépassant les limites de la sensibilité des acteurs de ce drame. Un lecteur doit pouvoir se mettre à la place du héros ou de l'héroïne d'une œuvre de fiction. Le style artiste et tourmenté des auteurs forme un contraste trop violent avec la simplicité rudimentaire des personnages pour qu'on entre et qu'on demeure volontiers dans le monde misérable de Germinie et des Jupillon.

Pour certains, le naturalisme n'est que la forme poussée à l'excès de l'évocation du sordide et du déplaisant. On sait qu'en théorie, c'était la tentative d'introduire dans le roman les méthodes de la science. Pour Zola, qui pas plus que les autres auteurs des *Soirées de Médan*, n'a été un naturaliste intégral, c'est la recherche plus ou moins consciente de l'attitude centrale de l'esprit dont parle Valéry au sujet de Léonard de Vinci "à partir de laquelle les entreprises de la connaissance et les opérations de l'art sont également possibles."[18] Mais de cette attitude, Zola veut tirer une méthode qui lui permette d'établir un code de lois. Son imagination lui suggère une hypothèse que vérifie la logique de son récit; sa conclusion sera la loi qu'il se proposera d'appliquer plus tard dans le domaine de la sociologie pratique. Si Zola, dans la composition de ses romans, avait suivi cette méthode à la lettre, il n'aurait créé que des personnages synthétiques, entièrement privés de libre arbitre et agissant automatiquement dans des décors inertes. Or les uns et les autres restent vivants dans la mémoire du lecteur; mais c'est précisément à cause de l'échec des théories naturalistes qui ne peuvent empêcher l'auteur d'animer les êtres et les choses du souffle de son génie poétique. Zola savait qu'il était au fond un romantique. Sa doctrine, issue d'une théorie mécanistique de l'univers, car il voyait avec raison dans Diderot un ancêtre de son naturalisme, ne résultait pas seulement de ses convictions personnelles. Il avait été poussé à la concevoir après

[18] Paul Valéry, *Les divers essais sur Léonard de Vinci* (Paris, 1938), p. 15.

s'être rendu compte qu'il était impossible de faire mieux que Flaubert dans l'étude psychologique "des infiniment petits du sentiment." Quant à faire, "l'alalyse des choses artistiques, plastiques et nerveuses," il ne pouvait prétendre à la perfection des Goncourt.[19] Il ne lui restait donc qu'à mettre en œuvre, à force de volonté, la puissance de création qu'il sentait en lui, et c'est ce qu'il a fait. On peut dire par conséquent que la réussite artistique de certains volumes des *Rougon-Macquart* est due à une double contrainte : celle que lui imposaient des concurrents qu'il ne pouvait songer à dépasser, et celle qu'il s'est délibérément imposée de dompter son romantisme. Cette dernière contrainte a pris la forme de la discipline prétendue scientifique qui l'a servi au même titre que la règle des unités avait servi les dramaturges classiques, et un réalisme scrupuleux foncièrement étranger à son tempérament, Flaubert.

Ce n'est pas sans lutte intérieure que Zola s'est imposé un effacement relatif de sa personnalité dans ses œuvres ; mais il croyait aux fins utilitaires de l'art. "J'ai un but," dit-il dans la préface de *L'Assommoir*. A son avis, ces fins étaient d'autant mieux atteintes que l'œuvre était plus fidèle dans sa représentation de la vérité. Quand il a cru avoir en main une méthode d'une efficacité certaine, Zola ne pouvait manquer de vouloir faire du naturalisme un agent d'action sur le monde extérieur. Il écrit en effet dans son *Roman expérimental* : "nous verrons qu'on peut agir sur le milieu social, en agissant sur les phénomènes dont on se sera rendu maitre chez l'homme."[20] Il n'ignorait certes pas les problèmes sociaux dès les débuts de sa carrière, mais il avait été dans les traditions du réalisme d'éviter l'un des défauts dont s'étaient rendus coupables les romantiques : celui de faire de leurs ouvrages une tribune. Zola est donc resté fidèle à cette tradition dans la meilleure partie de son œuvre.

Si l'auteur des *Rougon-Macquart*, ce myope à l'esprit exact, a montré trop de complaisance dans la recherche et dans l'application de lois fixes dans ses ouvrages, il témoigne cependant d'un sens aigu de l'observation. Dans un temps où, selon Stéphane Mallarmé, "la vérité devient la forme populaire de la beauté,"[21] Zola représente parfaitement son époque. Non seulement il est hanté par le souci de la vérité, mais encore il sait communiquer à ses lecteurs l'impression d'un contact presque physique avec la réalité en leur faisant raser la surface des choses. Par cette qualité que complète une autre hantise qui lui est propre, celle d'inclure dans chacun de ses livres la totalité d'un sujet, il peut servir d'exemple pour illustrer une boutade qu'André Gide attribue à l'un des personnages des *Faux-Monnayeurs*. Celui-ci, un certain Paul-

[19] *Journal des Goncourt*, 27 août 1870.
[20] Emile Zola, *Le Roman expérimental* (Paris, 1898), p. 19.
[21] *Dix-neuf lettres de Stéphane Mallarmé à Emile Zola* (Paris, 1929), lettre du 3 février 1877.

Ambroise qui représente sans doute Paul Valéry, fait la remarque "que la vérité c'est l'apparence, que le mystère c'est la forme, et ce que l'homme a de plus profond, c'est sa peau."[22] Il est évident que le monde de Zola semble relever plutôt du domaine des sensations que de la recherche de l'inconnu. Néanmoins, son amour de la vie et ses angoisses, ses joies et ses indignations transparaissent à travers un style lourd mais substantiel. En cela il échappe au défaut de superficialité auquel condamne un réalisme trop consciencieux. C'est pourquoi le monde de Zola, illustré de symboles et chargé d'une sombre poésie reste l'un des plus personnels du roman français.

C'est un état d'esprit commun qui vers 1880 fait cristalliser autour de Zola l'union momentanée des auteurs des *Soirées de Médan*. Ces bourgeois se révoltent contre la bourgeoisie et contre son attitude devant l'art, devant la guerre et devant la vie. En artistes convaincus cependant, ils cherchent alors à décrire plutôt qu'à analyser. Pour Maupassant, il s'agit de rendre ce qu'il appelle l'intimité des âmes sous une forme qui satisfasse son sens esthétique. L'indifférence parfois cruelle qui caractérise ses œuvres au début de sa carrière, deviendra, vers la fin de sa vie, l'expression personnelle d'une philosophie du désespoir. Huysmans dépassera l'amère stagnation d'*A Vau-l'eau* dans une conversion dont le récit fournira la matière à des évocations tour à tour sarcastiques ou pieuses. Quant à Zola,[23] sa puissance se diluera dans les effusions d'une mystique humanitaire.

Les auteurs naturalistes ne furent d'ailleurs pas les seuls à changer d'attitude. Sur un plan bien différent et dans un tout autre sens, Paul Bourget suivra lui aussi une évolution qui l'éloignera du positivisme. A ses débuts, il est dans une certaine mesure l'héritier intellectuel de Stendhal. Disciple de Taine dans ses *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, parus en 1883, la publication du *Disciple* en 1889 le sépare de son ancien maître. Bien plus que le *Manifeste des cinq*, en 1887, c'est ce roman qui a marqué le déclin du naturalisme en tant que doctrine. A partir du *Disciple*, l'œuvre de Bourget tend en politique vers la monarchie, en philosophie vers le spiritualisme, et en littérature vers l'idéalisme. Il est inutile de souligner que pas plus dans la prétendue expérimentation de Zola que dans les romans à thèse de Bourget, l'on ne trouvait dans les conclusions des auteurs plus que les prémisses qu'ils avaient posées au début de leur démonstration. Il apparaît toutefois que les œuvres des deux romanciers reposent sur des systèmes de lois dans lesquelles ils ont

[22] André Gide, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs* (Paris, 1925), p. 234.

[23] Dès 1882, Zola doute de la nécessité de la "vie vécue" dans le roman: "Les livres des autres temps s'en sont bien passé," dit-il un jour à Céard et à Huysmans; voir *Journal des Goncourt*, 6 avril 1882. Quant à son matérialisme, il est fort ébranlé par la mort de sa mère, qui a, paraît-il, "fait un trou dans le nihilisme de ses convictions religieuses"; *ibid.*, 20 février 1883.

foi. Par ailleurs, tous deux étaient poussés par le désir de découvrir la vérité, désir qui parfois semble s'être borné au goût de la certitude.

Si l'on avait donc pris à la lettre ceux d'entre les réalistes qui voulaient substituer l'observation et le raisonnement à la sensibilité et à l'imagination, on pourrait dire qu'ils ont invariablement échoué dans cette tentative. S'ils avaient eux-mêmes toujours suivi leurs théories, il serait légitime de les accuser de n'avoir fait que consigner leurs observations, et d'avoir abouti à ce que Baudelaire appelle "non pas une méthode nouvelle de création mais une description minutieuse des accessoires."[24] En second lieu, leurs raisonnements sembleraient l'équivalent littéraire de la dialectique des médecins de Molière quand ils discutent sur l'origine, le développement et la cure des maladies. Le fait est que si ces romanciers ont pour un temps rejeté l'imagination en tant que fantaisie mensongère, ils n'ont pu éviter de mettre en œuvre leur imagination créatrice, faculté inséparable de toute œuvre d'art. Chez eux, cette imagination s'est souvent reposée sur une documentation solide, parfois un peu trop livresque. Elle a pu s'appuyer sur un fond d'expérience personnelle insuffisant. Elle a pu se fier parfois à des lois encore mal vérifiées et d'un caractère scientifique sujet à caution. Mais par la vertu même de la création littéraire, c'est encore cette imagination qui restait à la base de tout roman digne d'être lu.

Le moment est venu, croyons-nous, de citer quelques-uns de ces auteurs qui avaient cru que l'art pouvait rendre justice à la vie par une littérature qui eût suivi le principe de la "tranche de vie."

En 1887, dans la préface de *Pierre et Jean*, Maupassant admet que la réalité n'a qu'une valeur subjective "puisque, dit-il, nous portons chacun la nôtre dans notre pensée et dans nos organes." La tâche de l'écrivain sera donc en premier lieu d'apprendre à voir cette réalité en la débarrassant de l'aspect convenu que n'ont pas manqué de lui attribuer tous ceux qui l'ont contemplée avant lui. Pour atteindre ce but, Flaubert recommandait à son jeune disciple "de regarder [cette réalité] assez longtemps et avec assez d'attention pour en découvrir un aspect qui n'ait été vu ou dit par personne." Or, bien plus tard, nous voyons chez Proust, c'est-à-dire chez un romancier symboliste, cette observation attentive et minutieuse qui fait de l'objet examiné une sorte de prolongement de l'artiste. Par ailleurs, nous lisons dans le *Temps retrouvé* que l'art ne peut être que personnel et que "ce qui était clair avant nous n'est pas à nous".[25]

La tâche de l'écrivain, selon Maupassant, sera donc de reproduire cette illusion qui lui est propre, "suivant la logique des faits," c'est-à-dire en se conformant aux lois qui gouvernent une apparente vraisemblance, ce qui revient en somme à ce que Bourget appelait la "crédibilité." Et

[24] Baudelaire, *L'Art romantique*, p. 399.
[25] Marcel Proust, *Le Temps retrouvé*, II (Paris, 1927), p. 27.

Maupassant concluait en déclarant: "Les grands artistes sont donc ceux qui imposent à l'humanité leur illusion particulière."

Joris-Karl Huysmans, dans les premières pages de *Là-bas*, rejette le naturalisme à cause de "l'immondice de ses idées," et parce que cette doctrine n'admet pas que "la curiosité de l'art commence là où les sens cessent de servir." En d'autres termes, il reprend le thème de Baudelaire suivant lequel le réalisme, organe du progrès matériel, implique "la domination progressive de la matière,"[26] alors que sur toute espèce d'art doit régner l'imagination.

Tandis que se manifestaient ces désaffections envers le simple recensement du réel, toute une lignée de penseurs, de Renan à Bergson, ébranlaient les assises philosophiques du réalisme et du naturalisme. La réalité n'apparaissait plus comme une et entière, le concept d'une nature humaine stable dont il était possible de découvrir les mobiles cessait d'être une vérité démontrée, on ne croyait plus à une seule loi gouvernant la matière et l'esprit. La notion de liberté reparaissait et permettait d'échapper à l'étouffant déterminisme de Taine. Et pourtant, un monde en voie de progrès matériel n'a rejeté ni l'apport passé ni la contribution présente de la doctrine réaliste dans ses effets. Non seulement chaque génération témoigne d'un réalisme qui lui est propre, mais encore elle a son interprétation particulière de l'image qu'offre d'elle-même chaque génération passée. Le réalisme du passé sert donc de point de comparaison avec le réalisme contemporain, et il a pour conséquence indirecte d'infirmer la prétendue objectivité des observateurs du présent.

Parmi les romanciers de ce siècle-ci, Roger Martin du Gard, avec la série des *Thibault*, est peut-être celui chez lequel le matérialisme et la passion de la vérité prennent le mieux l'aspect d'un nouveau classicisme.

Sur un plan bien différent, un Louis-Ferdinand Céline montre la voie dans laquelle la crudité de langage des naturalistes a fait s'engager certains. Sa verve grossière et sa rare puissance d'invective révèlent un tempérament d'écrivain-né. Mais son œuvre, imprégnée de haine pour l'humanité, conduit au nihilisme d'où Huysmans était sorti par sa conversion et Maupassant par la folie et la mort. La complaisance dans l'évocation de l'ignoble et un vocabulaire scatologique sont des défauts qu'on a reprochés maintes fois aux naturalistes. Qu'on ne s'y trompe pas toutefois: c'est un monde d'un subjectivisme outrancier que présente au lecteur l'auteur de *Voyage au bout de la nuit*.

Dans le nombre des écrivains modernes, il n'en est guère, tout au moins parmi les plus grands, qui n'aient eu à faire face au réalisme et n'aient discuté les problèmes qu'il pose aux romanciers. Marcel Proust

[26] Baudelaire, "Le Public moderne et la photographie," *Curiosités esthétiques*, p. 267.

estime que dans l'art il n'y a de vérité que subjective, puisque seule, la perception "grossière et erronée" place tout dans l'objet alors que tout est dans l'esprit. Le pastiche du *Journal* des Goncourt qui se trouve dans le *Temps retrouvé* donne au narrateur du roman l'occasion de découvrir que ce qui l'intéresse, ce sont les phénomènes qui se passent à une certaine profondeur de l'être, ainsi que les modifications qu'apportent à ceux-ci les changements dans l'espace et dans le temps. Il nie donc la vérité d'une littérature de notations, copie d'une réalité qui n'est qu'une espèce de "déchet de l'expérience," à peu près identique pour tout le monde. La seule réalité qui importe au narrateur doit donc être en dehors du temps, puisque les sens sont incapables de la percevoir, que l'intelligence dessèche les images du passé, et que l'avenir n'est fait que de fragments de présent sans réalité. Proust organisera donc ses personnages autour de lois psychologiques dont son intuition lui affirmera la vérité.

André Gide, dans les *Faux-Monnayeurs*, fait déplorer par Edouard, son porte-parole (dans la mesure où qui que ce soit puisse jamais être le porte-parole de Gide), que le roman reste en général "si craintivement cramponné à la réalité."[27] C'est pour cette raison, estime Edouard, qu'il ne peut approcher de la perfection et de la qualité profondément humaine des tragédies du dix-septième siècle. Celles-ci demeurent des œuvres d'art précisément grâce à un volontaire "écartement de la vie." Ce n'est pas, poursuit Edouard, que la réalité ne l'intéresse pas, mais elle le gêne. Pour lui, le problème fondamental que pose la création d'une œuvre de fiction serait "la lutte entre les faits proposés par la réalité et la réalité idéale."[28] Gide, par ailleurs, a écrit dans son *Journal* (juin 1905) que la réalité devait servir et non pas dominer l'art. Au lieu donc de mettre le lecteur dans le contact le plus direct avec la nature, Gide tient à le garder proche du mécanisme de la création quitte à l'empêcher de se perdre dans le monde du romancier, et, tel un dieu un peu jaloux, rappeler à ce lecteur qu'il se trouve en présence d'une œuvre dont il ne convient pas de perdre l'auteur de vue. Il faut ajouter que ses personnages sont pourvus d'un certain libre arbitre. Leur personnalité se forme d'après leurs actions et leurs pensées, et c'est souvent par le reflet de celles-ci sur l'esprit d'autres personnages qu'elle se fait connaître. Comme, en outre, le lecteur n'est mis au courant qu'en termes assez vagues de leur apparence physique et de leur condition sociale, il ressort clairement que Gide est à l'opposé d'un réalisme déterministe.

C'est un des attributs les plus importants du véritable artiste que de décomposer la réalité telle que la lui offrent ses sens pour en regrouper les traits essentiels en suivant les principes que lui dictent sa sensibilité,

[27] André Gide, *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*, p. 236.
[28] *Ibid.*, p. 240.

son intuition, et sa vision personnelle du monde. Ce phénomène se produit constamment chez les peintres et se remarque tout particulièrement chez ceux d'entre eux qui font leur propre portrait. De telles différences entre le modèle et l'œuvre sautent aux yeux, qu'il apparait que le peintre a séparé les uns des autres les traits que lui offrait le miroir, pour les reproduire autour d'une idée centrale, de l'idée qu'il se fait de lui-même. A cette conception subjective de l'art pictural correspond la fragmentation de la réalité, telle que nous la voyons opérée plus ou moins consciemment par la plupart des romanciers; tout au moins par ceux qui sont capables d'animer leur création du souffle de la vie.

Ce phénomène de fragmentation du réel, l'écartement de la vie dont parle Gide, suggèrent la théorie que développe Jean-Paul Sartre dans ses livres de philosophie *L'Imaginaire* et l'*Imagination*, théorie dont le roman *La Nausée* offre l'exemple partiel.

Si la perception est un acte, l'image, selon Sartre, en est un également. La condition d'œuvre d'art implique une sorte de nécessité qui fait ressortir la contingence de l'objet que représente cette œuvre. Tant que l'image occupe la conscience de l'être qui la perçoit, l'objet qui lui a servi de modèle s'efface de la conscience de cet être. En d'autres termes, le monde réel doit s'évanouir quand le spectateur, l'auditeur ou le lecteur se trouvent en présence des formes, des sons ou des mots sous lesquels cette réalité a été transposée.

On admet communément qu'un roman est un miroir. Pour Sartre, lire un roman, "c'est sauter dans le miroir," et se trouver dans un autre monde que le lecteur a l'impression de reconnaitre sans qu'il l'ait jamais vu auparavant. Vu de ce monde-là, c'est le nôtre qui a l'air d'un reflet; et c'est pourtant celui dans lequel on revient quand on ferme le livre.[29] Dans *La Nausée*, le personnage principal, Antoine Roquentin, reçoit la double révélation de la misère qui est inhérente à l'existence, ainsi que du caractère en dehors du temps, éternel et nécessaire de l'œuvre d'art. Accessoirement, il se rend compte que l'objectivité de l'historien n'est qu'une illusion. Dans les recherches qu'il fait à la bibliothèque de Bouville sur un certain M. de Rollebon, une abondante documentation devrait rendre sa tâche facile. Mais s'il peut ordonner les faits avec rigueur, l'ordre qu'il leur donne est extérieur et tire son origine de l'esprit de l'historien: "Pas une lueur ne vient du côte de Rollebon,"[30] écrit-il. Si Jean-Paul Sartre rejette ainsi la notion qu'une biographie historique puisse être objective, il n'admet pas davantage qu'il soit possible d'appliquer au roman la doctrine réaliste. Son attitude peut se résumer par une déclaration de Simone de Beauvoir: "On sait exacte-

[29] Jean-Paul Sartre, "A propos de John Dos Passos," *Situations*, I (1947), 14.
[30] Jean-Paul Sartre, *La Nausée*, p. 26.

ment ce qu'a été l'école réaliste en France: un parti-pris truqué d'impartialité en face du donné, attitude qui se détruit d'elle-même."[31]

Au cours des siècles, le réalisme semble avoir été la tentative de faire adhérer l'œuvre d'art à la réalité. Ces tentatives correspondent à leur époque soit par opposition à la doctrine dominante de ce temps-là, soit dans une synthèse de deux mouvements contraires, soit par un compromis entre ces tendances, mais en général, on tenta de les réaliser sur le plan de l'impersonnalité. Ce réalisme est devenu une doctrine au temps où, par suite de circonstances économiques et historiques, la philosophie, les progrès scientifiques et matériels, et les arts, paraissaient s'intégrer dans une unité qui nous paraît aujourd'hui bien factice. A une époque désarticulée comme la nôtre, la méthode a subsisté néanmoins sous la forme de la franchise brutale avec laquelle se poursuit l'enquête sur le monde et sur l'homme. Elle s'est adjoint la recherche des richesses du subconscient, et témoigne de la volonté de prendre part à la formation philosophique et morale des temps actuels.

En tant que doctrine, il est certain que l'on n'y croit plus guère, car cette doctrine correspondrait, sur le plan de l'individu, à la tentative de faire coïncider la conscience à l'être, ce qui est évidemment impossible.

Brown University

[31] Simone de Beauvoir, *L'Amérique au jour le jour* (Paris, 1948), p. 60.

REALISM IN THE GERMAN NOVEL

HENRY C. HATFIELD

FOR THE purposes of this study, "realism" may be defined as a literary attitude which attaches very great importance to representing persons, events, and ideas with a high degree of fidelity. The realistic artist need not restrict himself to the world of the tangible and the three-dimensional, though he must respect that world and believe it to be in some sense valid; he may also concern himself with ideas and psychic conditions without forfeiting his status. He may even be deeply concerned with the investigation of his own ego—witness in Germany the tradition of the pietistic autobiography, to which the modern German novel is so deeply indebted; but he strives towards objectivity in his self-depiction. The realist stands in the tradition of *mimesis*; the writer is seen as a maker rather than as a seer or as a Storm and Stress Prometheus. He may regard his characters with a certain irony but must still, in a fundamental sense, take them seriously. Without implying any rigid economic determinism, one may note that the realist, with his considerable awareness of the importance of money and of other hard facts and his tendency to stress the value of work, is generally a product of the middle class, though he may, and often does prefer the attitude of the aristocracy to that of his own social group. Finally, literary realism does not imply any particular philosophic or religious position. The realist may be a follower of Feuerbach like Keller, or something of a Spinozist like Goethe; but he may also be a late heir of German romanticism like Thomas Mann, or even like Grimmelshausen a Catholic of the Counter-Reformation, who finds the "real" world repulsive and wicked but deals with it faithfully and at length.

The answers to a few cardinal questions may prove to be of assistance in the search for the realist. What is the attitude of a given writer towards the factors of wealth and poverty; of relations between social classes; towards love and sex; towards the fear and impact of death? How convincingly does he deal with the motivation of human action, in terms of the general psychological beliefs of his time and of the attention accorded to psychological matters by the literary conventions of the novel of his age? More criteria could of course be added; but these will, I trust, suggest that the degree of "realism" of a book depends signifi-

cantly on the way it deals with the general and crucial questions of human existence. The realist tends to treat his subject with a certain breadth and detail, in other words, at some length. Thus the novel, notoriously the loosest and most flexible of genres, would seem to be the form best adapted to his purpose. The novel can be expanded almost at will—an advantage and, of course, a danger.

Realism, as outlined above, is not a movement which can be restricted to two or three periods of German literary history; it is rather a tendency which appears in the German novel in the sixteenth century (of course, in other genres, it antedates the novel) and continues from that time to the present. German realism should not be as closely associated with the nineteenth-century novel as is the common practice. Many of the most important works of German realism were written before that century; and some of the better known "realists" of the nineteenth century appear today deficient in their grasp of reality, in aesthetic and intellectual stature, or in both. It should also be pointed out that the vague term "poetic realism," applied to writers as different as Keller and Storm, Heyse and Mörike, seems to have only the negative usefulness of excluding "pure" realists; the admixture of the "poetic" (or the sentimental) varies so greatly that some writers of this so-called school have very little valid claim to realism. Of course, various factors can complicate or distort the most earnest realistic intention: the tendency to glorify a given class, as in Gustav Freytag; or to satirize, as in some of Heinrich Mann's novels; the persistence of some obsolescent literary device, like the use of the secret society;[1] or the author's obsession with some inadequate or simply false idea, like the racism of the *Blut und Boden* school or the chauvinism of Hans Grimm's *Volk ohne Raum*. A considerable number of not ungifted German novelists restrict themselves to the life of a single province, or retreat, like Raabe, to the depiction of obscure eccentrics; and these writers simply do not have "world" enough, to use Rilke's expression, to be of major significance.

These considerations may explain in part the exclusion or relative neglect, in this article, of certain novelists. Obviously, in view of the expansion of German literature after the eighteenth century, the critic must become more selective and perhaps even arbitrary in dealing with more recent novelists. But at least I have tried to limit myself to works of primary intrinsic importance. The one exception, a brief treatment of a novel by Jörg Wickram, can, I trust, be defended in view of his primacy in time.

The Alsatian Jörg Wickram is often considered the first German

[1] Marianne Thalmann, *Der Trivialroman des achtzehnten Jahrhunderts und der Romantik* (Berlin, 1923).

novelist.[2] It is difficult to distinguish sharply between novel proper and romance, tale, or "déclassé" epic in prose. Wickram's *Galmy* and *Gabriotto* are nothing but knightly romances; but his *Der Knabenspiegel* (1554) displays enough interest in character development, in the "real" world of the sixteenth century with its nobles and burghers, peasants and rogues, to deserve classification as a novel, though it is a work of really exemplary psychological crudity. It is not insignificant that this first realistic German novel is a product of the middle class and is thoroughly bourgeois in attitude, both in its undisguised didacticism and in its materialism. The good characters work hard and rise in the social scale; the wastrel sinks. The crassness and at the same time the honesty, of a sort, of Wickram's treatment of psychology appear most clearly in the following episode. The evil companion of Willibaldus, the protagonist, has seduced the daughter of an innkeeper; the two youths then flee.

> The good simple honest man did not like to lose his guests, for they had been of more use to him than three milch-cows. His daughter is still sadder; for she is worried that things will turn out as they actually then did. The fellow had deceived her, and deceived her still further. All that was hidden from father and mother, until after a while the good daughter had a child. Then the tumult [*der Betteltanz*] really began, for no one knew to what place the two had gone. In a short time however the child died; the good mother did not feel especially sorry about it as she could find no father nowhere.[3]

It would be difficult to find another example of naive realism of quite this type, except perhaps for the story of the peasant in Hemingway's "An Alpine Idyll."

In the seventeenth century, the lines of development of the German novel form a rather complicated pattern. The Germans take over various traditions from the west and south: the *Amadis* novels (from 1569 on) and the "courtly gallant" (or "heroic gallant") strain, largely from France; the pastoral tale from Italy, Spain, France, and England; the picaresque from Spain, and to a lesser extent from France. The "courtly gallant" novel contained tendencies potentially realistic; the technique of the *roman à clef* at least threw an indirect light on the contemporary world, and the encyclopaedic tendency of the "court" novel, as it develops in Bucholtz and Lohenstein, gives evidence of the "joy in raw material" so often associated with realism. But, for all their wealth of documentation, such works as *Hercules und Valisca* and *Arminius und*

---

[2] See W. Scherer, *Die Anfänge des deutschen Prosaromans und Jörg Wickram von Colmar* (Strassburg, 1877); Gertrud Fauth, *Jörg Wickrams Romantechnik* (Strassburg, 1914).

[3] *Der Knabenspiegel*, chap. VIII. The clumsiness of the translation intends to reproduce that of the original.

Thusnelda can by no means be called realistic; still less do they deserve treatment as works of art. Eichendorff's phrase "tollgewordene Realenzyklopädien" is a just one.

Only the picaresque novel was realistic in any important sense, and it was from this tradition that *Simplicissimus*, the one great novel of the German seventeenth century, drew much of its material. It has been held that the Spanish rogue novel mirrors the dislocated economy of metropolitan Spain; unlimited imperial expansion abroad was accompanied by economic breakdown and by disorder and outlawry in Spain itself. In the Germany of the Thirty Years War the description of such conditions must have seemed "real" indeed; the vogue of the picaresque novels is understandable enough.[4] The elements of adventure and "escape" must also have been attractive. It has also been pointed out that the Germans, in the Eulenspiegel tradition, already possessed stories of a somewhat similar spirit.[5] Translations appeared in quick succession. The Spanish outlaw became, like the "Landstörtzer," a stock character of German fiction; when Ubeda's *La Pícara Justina* was translated in 1626, his female counterpart appeared in the "Landstörtzerin." The taste for the *Schelmenroman* reached its peak in the 1640s. The adventures of the various ne'er-do-wells are related in a drastic, straightforward, and largely amoral way, often with a great deal of humor. In various of these novels there appears another element of considerable importance, the ascetic Catholicism of the Counter-Reformation. The viciousness of the world is stressed in the manner typical of the baroque. In his translation of *Guzmán*, Albertinus, a pupil of the Jesuits, added original moralizing reflections; his hero repents and goes on a pilgrimage, but the intended religious development is shown very crudely. In general, roguish tricks and religious exhortations are not really integrated.[6] Only Grimmelshausen was to fuse the two into a realistic novel of the adventures, sins, and repentance of a single developing character.

Grimmelshausen's debt to the picaresque tradition appears in his *Landstörtzerin Courasche*, in the other "Simplicianische Schriften," and at many points in his major novel. But his hero is not really a rogue, and *Simplicius Simplicissimus* is not essentially a picaresque novel. Neither is it, strictly speaking, a *Bildungsroman*; at least, the hero does not show the gradual, "organic" growth generally associated with that

[4] See Herbert Rausse, *Zur Geschichte des spanischen Schelmenromans in Deutschland* (Münster, 1908), pp. 9 f.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 12; see also Melitta Gerhard, *Der deutsche Entwicklungsroman bis zu Goethes "Wilhelm Meister"* (Halle a. d. Saale, 1926), p. 59.

[6] See Käte Fuchs, *Die Religiosität des J. J. C. von Grimmelshausen* (Leipzig, 1935), "Palaestra," 202.

genre.[7] *Simplicissimus* combines elements of the picaresque and the autobiographical, descriptions of the age and social satire, chiliastic longings for political and religious reform, and a repeated call to withdraw from the world.

It would thus be simplistic to assign *Simplicissimus* to any single genre or school; its "realism" emerges as the resultant of divergent lines of force. Its most obvious intention is to expose the sinfulness and, in the Old Testament sense, the vanity of the world. The many illustrations (which are integral parts of the aesthetic whole) bear the motto: "Der Wahn betreügt." The few virtuous characters in the book show by precept and example the necessity of withdrawal from the world: the hermit in the first book, the pious Hertzbruder who becomes a pilgrim, Simplicissimus himself as a recluse on his desert island at the end. Perhaps diffident concerning his own powers, Grimmelshausen borrows from Guevara the powerful homily[8] on the theme "Adieu Welt" which brings the fifth book to a close. "Posui finem curis, spes et fortuna valete."

The direct, didactic exhortation to flee the world is of course greatly strengthened by Grimmelshausen's account of his hero's adventures. The atrocities of the seventeenth-century soldatesca and of the brutalized peasantry are as unflinchingly shown as is any event in a modern war novel. That they are seen through the eyes of an innocent, a "Parzival" type, only heightens the horror; the occasional note of grim humor only makes the picture more credible. The moral degradation of the nobility and of the intriguing officers in the imperial army is at least equally repulsive. The naive Simplex has to play the part of a madman in order to exist in a vicious court which is itself essentially mad. The device is obviously a satiric one, but its effect is not unrealistic.

Simplicissimus lives in a world governed by gluttony, lust, class prejudices, and treachery, and above all by the inconstancy of fortune. His impressions of sexual love are especially revealing: he first learns of its existence in a filthy stable; his two marriages are based on lust and frivolity; his erotic experiences in Paris are seen as disgusting as well as sinful. Banqueting, drinking, dancing—"wordly" activities in general—all lead through vulgar excess to surfeit and nausea.

Yet it would be misleading to stress, as did Kuno Francke,[9] only Grimmelshausen's rejection of the world and consequent ascetic intention. There are complicating factors which to some extent act as

[7] But Grimmelshausen's rather surprising reference (Book I, chap. IX) to Aristotle's doctrine that the intellect must develop from potentiality to activity would agree perfectly with the idea of *Bildung*, and reminds one of Goethe's view of human character as an entelechy.

[8] In the translation of Albertinus.

[9] *Social Forces in German Literature* (New York, 1897), p. 206.

counterbalances. The extreme naiveté of the boy Simplicissimus serves of course to bring out more sharply the degeneration of society, but it has other ends besides—the exposition of the psychological development of an ignorant but by no means stupid person, and humor as well. As the "hunter of Soest," Simplicissimus has an eventful and very successful career as a freebooter; Grimmelshausen does not fail to note that he is behaving sinfully, but shows considerable gusto in telling of his exploits. This joy in adventure and action and in the comic asserts itself despite the ascetic strain so typical of the baroque; the "Lust zu fabulieren" competes with the didactic intention.[10]

In its style also *Simplicissimus* resists easy classification. Like most writers of the seventeenth century, Grimmelshausen tends to a very free use of foreign words, lengthy listings, classical allusions, and displays of erudition (though in this last his purpose may be parodistic). Yet he is far less baroque than the contemporary court novel. In general, his style is direct, terse, and rich in proverbial expressions. As a realist, he suppresses no ugliness, brutality, or obscenity. When one finds, however, that shortly after a famous torture scene in the first book Grimmelshausen has inserted one of the purest lyrics of the century—

Komm Trost der Nacht, o Nachtigall!

—one realizes the complexity of his talent.

This complexity is manifest also in the fantastic, visionary, and symbolical elements of *Simplicissimus*, which stress Grimmelshausen's conviction of the mutability and dualism[11] of life. Most striking is the prophecy uttered by "Jupiter," strategically placed in the center of the novel, of the "Teutscher Held" who is to establish a realm of universal religious and political peace and social justice under German hegemony.[12] At this point, the author's satiric realism reasserts itself; "Jupiter" is revealed as a poor, insane vagabond, troubled by fleas.

It is remarkable that Grimmelshausen was able, in the five books of *Simplicissimus* as published in 1668, to include all the disparate elements of his novel within a form of extraordinary symmetry.[13] With the addition of the sixth book, this symmetry was largely lost; the various "Continuationen" destroyed it completely.

The imitations of *Simplicissimus*, with their stress on fantastic adventure, are without intrinsic value. Christian Reuter's *Schelmuffsky* (1696), a satire against the lying rogue who boasts of his adventures,

[10] Fuchs, *op. cit.*, pp. 119 ff.

[11] Ermatinger, *Weltdeutung in Grimmelshausens Simplicius Simplicissimus* (Leipzig and Berlin, 1925), pp. 38 ff.

[12] Julius Petersen, "Grimmelshausen's 'Teutscher Held,'" *Euphorion*, Ergänzungsheft XVII (1924), 1-30.

[13] Johannes Alt, *Grimmelshausen und der Simplicissimus* (Munich, 1936).

can be viewed as the protest of a more rationalistic generation against the fantastic excesses of the baroque. The somewhat earlier novels of Christian Weise are also marked by a rationalistic realism. But Reuter and Weise were mediocrities, and the German novel of the eighteenth century was to draw from the other sources—above all, from the realism of Defoe and Fielding, the moralism and psychological insight of Richardson, the introspective tradition of Pietism, the sentimentalism of Sterne, and the confessional frankness of Rousseau.

While the vogue of *Robinson Crusoe* was enormous in Germany, it seems, despite the wealth of translations and imitations, to have made no very significant contribution to the development of a realistic German novel on a literary level. None of the German imitators could equal the skill with which Defoe had recounted Crusoe's gradual adjustment to his isolation. The majority of the "Robinsonaden" merely represent a variation of the novel of adventure, which had been popular since the seventeenth century; they were rejected by the more cultivated public, while *Robinson Crusoe* itself was popular among all social classes.[14] Schnabel's *Insel Felsenburg* (1731-43), which is generally considered the best of the German descendants of *Crusoe*, belongs to the smaller group of Utopian "Robinsonaden." In the Utopian novel, the desert island becomes a "glückselige Insel," which is seen as an asylum, not an exile.[15] It is probably significant that the most important German "Robinsonade" represents a humanitarian protest against contemporary society. Schnabel's "good" characters embody a sort of virtue similar to that later admired in Gellert's Swedish Countess or Lessing's Sir William Sampson; his villain is a monster of incredible blackness. Except for the use of statistics—the listing of provisions, discoveries, etc., inherent in the Robinson Crusoe theme, *Die Insel Felsenburg* can hardly be called realistic.

The imitators of Richardson, such as Gellert, Hermes, and Sophie de la Roche, are in general so preoccupied with glorifying virtue and denouncing vice that they miss the essential fresh element in the Richardsonian novel—the elaborate exposition of the psychology of ordinary people. In Germany, the Richardsonian element led to important new developments only when it was combined with other strains, as in the works of Wieland and Goethe.

With the possible exception of Thomas Mann, Wieland is the most dualistic of German novelists. His "seraphic" and moralizing strain is opposed by an antimetaphysical, down-to-earth tendency of at least

[14] August Kippenberg, *Robinson in Deutschland bis zur Insel Felsenburg* (Hanover, 1892), pp. 44 ff., 83.

[15] Fritz Brüggemann, *Utopie und Robinsonade* (Weimar, 1914); cf. Kippenberg, *op. cit.*, p. 95. Brüggemann has demonstrated Schnabel's knowledge of certain Utopian works.

equal strength; the influence of Klopstock and Richardson is balanced against that of Cervantes, Fielding, and Voltaire. The golden mean upheld by the mature Wieland is marked by an ironic attitude towards both extreme positions—again, an attitude which reminds one of Mann.

In his youth, Wieland was a warm admirer of Richardson. As Erich Schmidt points out,[16] there is a paradox here; Wieland, as an enthusiastic follower of Shaftesbury, might have been expected to condemn all "perfect characters." However, the inconsistency had no important effects on his novels. His satiric *Don Sylvio von Rosalva* (1764) marks, as do his verses of the period, a turning towards the "realistic" pole of his nature. Its explicit tendency is the deflation of *Schwärmerei*—of any enthusiastic delusion in general—symbolized here by the belief in fairy tales.

More typical, because more complicated, is his *Agathon* (1766-67), with its playing off of epicurean enjoyment against Platonic virtue. The exterior events of the novel, shipwrecks, capture by pirates, etc., follow an outworn tradition; the Greek setting, while elaborately developed, is of secondary importance. Agathon and Psyche are rather sentimental Germans in Greek costume who have an eighteenth-century regard for "the touching beauty of slumbering nature," while the sophist Hippias seems to represent the more materialistic wing of the French Enlightenment.

The real contribution of *Agathon* lies, as Blankenburg implied in his *Versuch über den Roman* (1774), in its development of character. It has often been remarked that Wieland combined the detailed psychological analysis of Richardson with the irony and realism of Fielding. At least equally important is the autobiographical element. The experiences of a good, very naive young man who wavers between impossibly lofty ideals and the very real attractions of the senses, are told convincingly and with benevolent irony. Lionel Trilling has pointed out that the close identification of author and hero in the *Bildungsroman* tends towards "a leniency of moral judgment."[17] One can also argue that the autobiographical nature of the novel of education gives it a flavor of actuality. In the case of *Agathon*, both generalizations apply.

Both the didacticism and the pervasive optimism of *Agathon* were soon to appear dated; it was one of the late products of the Enlightenment attitude so soon to be superseded by the Storm and Stress. Its realism lies in its skeptical analysis of character and its emphasis on the importance of milieu. The use of the word "Geschichte" in the full title of *Agathon*, as in that of *Die Abderiten*, indicates Wieland's emphasis on an empirical approach which gains verisimilitude through the employ-

[16] *Richardson, Rousseau und Goethe* (Jena, 1875), pp. 47 ff.
[17] *The Liberal Imagination* (New York, 1950), p. 37.

ment of psychological detail.[18] Wieland used Greek costume again in *Die Abderiten* (1774), this time to give a very amusing satiric account of German small-town life. But he was no longer in the advance guard of German literature; with the appearance of *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* in the same year a new era in the German novel began.

The debt of *Werther* to Richardson and Rousseau is so great that it may have partially obscured the freshness and originality of Goethe's novel. Goethe replaced the drawn-out psychologizing of Richardson and Rousseau by a concentrated analysis; by including only Werther's letters instead of those of a series of correspondents, he radically changed the inherited form of the "letter novel" and gained a far sharper focus on his central character.[19] *Werther* is marked by great awareness of the intangible, unpredictable, nonrational forces in human nature. Instead of drawing general moral conclusions in the manner of the Enlightenment, Goethe treats the individual specific person or situation as unique.[20] In his discussion with Albert about suicide, Werther rejects easy moral judgments; psychological conditions are treated as parallel to physical diseases. Similarly, Werther's own decline is shown with convincing clarity and detail. His neurosis runs its course through his experiences; it is not fundamentally caused by them.[21] Paradoxically, this highly subjective novel is objective[22] as well; Goethe employs, to use Nietzsche's phrase, a "double perspective." The "point of view" is in general Werther's, but shifts often enough for the reader to see him from without. This duality is admirably reflected in the style; against the rhapsodic or elegiac outpourings of Werther are balanced passages of clipped understatement, as in the last sentences.

Um Zwölfe Mittags starb er. Die Gegenwart des Amtmanns und seine Anstalten tuschten einen Auflauf. Nachts gegen Eilfe liess er ihn an die Stätte begraben, die er sich erwählt hatte. Der Alte folgte der Leiche und die Söhne, Albert vermocht's nicht. Man fürchtete für Lottens Leben. Handwerker trugen ihn. Kein Geistlicher hat ihn begleitet.

The objective aspect of *Werther* had presumably little to do with its success in its own time; readers of an introspective generation identified themselves with the hero, and Goethe was exasperated to find him-

[18] See Friedrich Sengle, *Christoph Martin Wieland* (Stuttgart, 1949), p. 339.
[19] See Karl Viëtor, *Goethe* (Bern, 1949), p. 41.
[20] See Israel S. Stamm, "The Empirical Character of *Sturm und Drang*," *Germanic Review*, XVIII (1943), 11-23.
[21] Ernst Feise, "Werther als nervöser Charakter," *Germanic Review*, I (1926), 185-253.
[22] In his treatment of milieu, Goethe is less consistently objective. Werther related his encounter with the aristocracy with realistic sharpness; but the "simple" people, like the girl at the fountain, appear in an idyllic glow.

self held responsible for the disease which he had described. But its objectivity may help to explain the fact that *Werther* still has a certain freshness and vitality which the novels of Richardson and Rousseau have largely lost.[23]

The first, incomplete version of *Wilhelm Meister* has a dual aspect: it is, as the original title implies, a novel of the theater, and it is a *Bildungsroman* as well. Whether or not Wilhelm was to have accomplished his "theatrical mission" remains an open question. One sees him emerging from a state of naiveté resembling Agathon's as he undergoes, very passively, a series of experiences which are largely of a comic nature. The pervasively humorous tone of the *Theatralische Sendung* amazes anyone who comes to it from *Werther*, and contrasts sharply with the final version, the *Lehrjahre*. Wilhelm is continually surprised and disillusioned; anticlimaxes abound; there are scenes of broad comedy. After taking to the road in picaresque fashion, he find that both his chastity and his purse are repeatedly endangered. Goethe's ironic and rather detached attitude towards the novel appears in his style and in his technique of making sudden leaps from one section of the narration to another. In the relaxed, humorous tone, as in the digressions on literary subjects, the influence of Fielding is evident.

There are of course serious elements as well: the ambition to found a national theater, the homage to Shakespeare, Wilhelm's efforts to shake off the bonds of his bourgeois existence. Wilhelm is regarded with sympathy as well as with irony. Yet, with the exception of the mysterious nature of the figures of Mignon and the Harper, the tone of the *Theatralische Sendung* is largely humorous, and realistic rather than symbolic. It is fascinating, if idle, to speculate on how the German novel would have developed if Goethe had completed the original version of *Meister*—if Friedrich Schlegel, Tieck, and their successors had been presented with the "Ur-Meister" as a model[24] rather than with the *Lehrjahre*, which is so much more serious, more symbolic, and more mystifying.

Much of the interest of the *Theatralische Sendung* is sociological. Both the stolid middle class and the Bohemians are drawn sharply and ironically. Wilhelm's practical friend, Werner, exemplifies the change from a static, rather stuffy way of doing business to a dynamic capitalism, but he is and remains a philistine; the bourgeoisie are never glorified. The German nobility, throughout much of the novel, is also satirically represented, but towards the end they appear as masters of the art

[23] Stuart P. Atkins, *The Testament of Werther* (Cambridge, Mass., 1949), pp. 217 f.

[24] The manuscript of the *Sendung* was not found until 1910.

of living. The attitude of the *Lehrjahre*, in which the hero's development includes his acceptance in an aristocratic circle, is foreshadowed.

When Goethe again took up work on *Meister*, he had become in many ways a different person. The revision is marked by an interest in the typical rather than the individual, by a strong tendency to symbolism, and by a use of direct didactic exhoration which one is tempted to attribute to Schiller's influence. (Wilhelm, however, is still treated with a most un-Schillerian irony.) In the machinations of the pedagogic Society of the Tower, the motif of the secret society is developed at length. Whether one accepts the conventional view that the *Lehrjahre* (1795-96) marks a great step forward, or the opinion of one critic that Goethe "ruined" his novel, it is clear that the final version represents a shift away from realism. More precisely, the last two books, with their symbolic and gnomic tone, contrast sharply with the opening sections. The *Lehrjahre* dominated the German romantic novel. Writers might parody it, like Friedrich Schlegel, or try like Novalis to counteract its tendencies; they felt its influence none the less.[25] As a *Bildungsroman*, of course, it continued to be the archetype of its genre long after the decline of romanticism, and not in Germany alone.

Die Wahlverwandtschaften (1809) is unique among Goethe's major works in that it deals primarily with an abstract idea or "problem"—the relation of determinism and freedom in human affairs, illustrated by the conflict between passion and the law of society in a novel of marriage. One notes a certain tendency to present characters as universal types, a marked use of symbolic actions, some employment of notions furnished by romantic theories of sciences, and even some use of the miraculous. Yet there are realistic elements as well; the vividness of one scene shocked many readers. Goethe's own formulation of the intention of this most difficult of his works, "to show social relations and the conflicts within them in symbolic form,"[26] can hardly be improved on. Its mature and penetrating consideration of marriage and divorce might have made a contribution to the development of a great realistic German novel in the nineteenth century. But no such great realistic tradition was to arise.

The most consistently realistic novel of the German eighteenth century is Karl Philip Moritz' autobiographical *Anton Reiser* (1785-90). Its depiction of the life of the poor, of the religious fanaticism of a certain type of Pietist, of hatred between husband and wife, father and son,

[25] Aside from its inserted novellas, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* consists essentially of reflections on pedagogy, economic and social conditions, the problems of emigration, etc., cast in semifictional form. Goethe seems simply not to have taken the conventions of prose fiction seriously in this work, which belongs more to intellectual than to literary history.

[26] *Goethe über seine Dichtungen*, ed H. G. Gräf, Part I, Vol. I, p. 373.

above all of the gifted but extraordinarily neurotic protagonist, is of unexampled fidelity and might well have excited the envy of the naturalists of the 1880s. There is a photographic accuracy throughout; thus young Reiser, as a poor apprentice, tells how the butter is carefully marked to show the amount which may be eaten at any meal. It is the most striking and the most painful example of the flair for psychological self-observation developed in the Pietist movement.

Broadly speaking, the romantic novel is not only unrealistic, but antirealistic. The interest in the dream, in hallucinatory forces, and so on, especially marked in Tieck, might, to be sure, have given a new dimension to the delineation of character, and Friedrich Schlegel's frankness in the treatment of erotic matters anticipates the "Young Germans" of the 1830s; but not much more can be claimed.[27] From the second decade of the century various romantic writers begin to turn towards realism; one thinks of Arnim's *Die Kronenwächter* (1817) and Tieck's later novellas and his *Vittoria Accorombona* (1840). Arnim may possibly have been influenced by Scott; Hauff and Alexis were avowedly his followers. L. M. Price's observation is most helpful: "In fact, wherever in the German novel we find the outward look upon life instead of the inward look upon self there is reason to suspect in the last analysis some modicum of English influence."[28] This illuminating generalization seems to hold for the whole sweep of the German novel from the early eighteenth century down to the rise of naturalism.

The German accomplishment in the nineteenth-century novel is so meager, compared to that of Russia, France, or England, that one is forced to speculate on the reasons for its relative insignificance. The situation is all the more striking when one considers that for some years, during the reign of Goethe, German literary prestige was unsurpassed. Sociological considerations do not seem to furnish, by themselves, an adequate explanation. Perhaps part of the answer may be found in the literary heritage itself. The classical period produced no sustained tradition in the novel; its main achievements were in the lyric and the drama. The orientation of the romantics obviously worked against the rise of a realistic tradition in prose fiction. Schiller and Goethe, appalled by the French Revolution, had retreated to the idea of an "aesthetic state"; the romantics went a long step further in their withdrawal from society. The subjectivity of the romantic philosophers accentuated the general tendency. Thus German novelists of a realistic bent had to start again from scratch, as it were, as in the early eighteenth century.

[27] The loving detail of Jean Paul's treatment of genre scenes, in his shorter works, reminiscent of that in Spitzweg's paintings, had some effect on Raabe and Keller.

[28] *English>German Literary Influences* (Berkeley, 1920), pp. 493 f.

Except in the field of the *Bildungsroman*, they had to depend on foreign models, above all on Scott and Dickens. Almost until the end of the century their works appear second-rate and often secondhand.[29]

After about 1830, German literature is marked by a certain will to realism. Broadly speaking, there is a strong reaction against the romantic tradition, but the romantic sense for historical development is accepted and becomes one of the dominant strains in the thinking of the age. The historical sense is manifested in literature with an increasing respect for precision and detail. The parallel to the spirit in other fields, especially in the natural sciences and in German scholarship generally, is obvious. Ranke's famous formula, "to show how things actually were," describes the intention of a great deal of prose fiction in the nineteenth century. Yet only rarely is this intention carried out with anything approaching complete success.

In the historical novel, with its interest in the data of the past, in accuracy of historical costume, there first appears a protracted effort, running through a whole genre, towards realism. The Waverley novels replace *Wilhelm Meister* as the great model. Wilhelm Hauff, the first novelist who clearly tries to imitate Scott, is still largely in the line of German romanticism. Willibald Alexis goes further; after disguising his first works as adaptations of Scott, he devotes a whole series of novels to the history of Prussia from the fourteenth to the nineteenth century. Alexis uses more detail, more documentation; a certain narrow nationalism and heaviness of style sharply limit his significance. In *Ekkehard* (1855), J. V. von Scheffel, who had considerable academic training, employed scholarly apparatus, including 285 footnotes, to show his historical authenticity. The novel is relatively successful, but Scheffel confused the scaffoldings of realism with its substance. His duchess and monk in tenth-century costume are very nineteenth-century indeed; and his stress on documentation opened the way for the lamentable *Professorenroman* of Ebers and Dahn. There is something professorial also about Freytag's series, *Die Ahnen* (1872-80), which is based on his popularization of history, *Bilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit*. In his *Vor dem Sturm* (1878), the more gifted Theodor Fontane brought the historical novel to a higher level; it is one of the very few products of the genre which can still be read with pleasure.

In the meantime, a new type of fiction had been developed in the *Zeitroman*. Here the focus shifts to the contemporary age; the novelist treats its problems and situations through a series of characters chosen to represent a broad range of classes and professions. In theory this was

[29] The obvious exception, the realistic achievement of Gottfried Keller, may be partially explained by the stimulus Keller gained from active participation in Swiss society. And, judged by the standards of Tolstoy or Flaubert, even Keller appears somewhat eccentric.

a long step towards realism; in actuality, the mediocrity of the writers prevented any great advance. The ambitions and the scope of Karl Gutzkow's novels of contemporary life are grandiose. His aim is the *Roman des Nebeneinander*: persons are taken from a broad range of social classes; a host of characters and events are related to the central figures; "heroes" are replaced by persons typical of the irresoluteness and complexity of the 1830s and 1840s. Each of his monster novels has a dominant theme: *Die Ritter von Geiste* (1850-52), a *roman à clef*, treats the struggle for social reform; *Der Zauberer von Rom* (1858-61), the question of ultramontanism. Yet the plots, with elaborate intrigues and melodramatic devices largely modeled on the novels of Eugène Sue, mark an extreme of unrealism. The artificiality of Gutzkow's style is notorious. In style and in characterization, Friedrich Spielhagen's novels show a marked advance, but he too remains largely within the tradition of Sue and Gutzkow. He combines sensationalism with the attempt to give serious social judgments on the contemporary German scene. The hero of his most important work, *Problematische Naturen* (1861), dies on the Berlin barricades in the Revolution of 1848; *In Reih und Glied* (1866), a glorification of social solidarity, gains an extraliterary interest through its use of the thinly disguised figure of Lassalle. A sturdy liberal with a tendency toward socialism, Spielhagen was a severe critic of the Bismarckian era, with its materialism and cult of power. In his social sympathies, though not in his style, Spielhagen anticipated the naturalistic school.

Within his more limited field, Gustav Freytag is more successful in the novel of contemporary society than either Gutzkow or Spielhagen. A follower of Dickens, and to a lesser extent of Scott, Freytag uses sensational or pseudo-romantic devices much more sparingly; his *Soll und Haben* (1855) is uninspired but has, in its best passages, a certain verisimilitude. Actually, Freytag's *Tendenz* is as strong as that of his more flamboyant contemporaries; his glorification of the middle class shows as much bias as their more critical attitude. Middle-class solidity is contrasted with aristocratic decay and Jewish slyness; German discipline with Polish wildness. The orphaned Anton Wohlfahrt, very much the virtuous apprentice, marries into his employer's family and becomes a member of the firm. *Soll und Haben* is, essentially, as vulgar as the works of Wickram or Horatio Alger. It is difficult to understand its reputation as a monument of realism, though its tendency, its mild humor, and Freytag's undeniable narrative skill explain its former popularity.

The nineteenth-century *Zeitroman* failed to produce a work of high intrinsic value. A far more successful realistic novel appeared, rather ironically, in the older tradition of the *Bildungsroman*—Keller's *Der*

grüne Heinrich (1854-55, drastically revised in the final version of 1879-80). In the hands of Tieck, Friedrich Schlegel, Novalis, and Mörike, the novel of apprenticeship had become much more subjective and more formless than in the eighteenth century. Keller, though he retains the motif of the development of a young hero, and follows the tradition in sending his would-be painter on his travels, sharply rejects the basic attitudes of German romanticism and most of the mystifying or fanciful elements of the older novel as well.[30] Events are narrated in a straightforward way, and, until the last part of the novel, are carefully motivated. Indeed, there is a conscious polemic against the passivity, conceit, and dilettantism—"das Geniessen und Absondern nach Stimmungen und romantischen Liebhabereien"—which Keller associates with romanticism in life and in art. He equates the realistic with the mature, the romantic with the adolescent.

The reality which Keller's "green" hero comes slowly and painfully to accept is rather carefully described. Following Feuerbach, Keller rejects the concepts of immortality and an extramundane god; the here and now gains primary importance. The beauty of this world, and especially of landscape, is a direct manifestation of the highest reality: "Gott strahlt von Wirklichkeit." Yet Keller's ethics are not of the sort usually associated with naturalism, but extremely rigoristic; to injure another human being is all the more serious when there is no supernatural power to redress the wrong. His realism includes a keen sense of the effects, mental as well as physical, of poverty; Green Henry, starving in Munich, recalls George Orwell's *Down and Out in Paris and London*. Keller's protagonist is not merely a social being, like the older Wilhelm Meister; he is a political animal. There is not only a strong sense of Swiss patriotism but also of the Swiss sense of participation in a functioning state, which contrasts sharply with the nonpolitical attitude of Goethe and the romanticists. Keller's social range is remarkable; it encompasses, besides the petty-bourgeois milieu of his hero's family and the Bohemians of his artist days, the Swiss farmers, bureaucrats, the proletariat of Munich, and the aristocracy. Characteristically, Keller singles out for special praise "the sincere hope of the worthy middle classes for a better, finer time of reality," associating this hope with the liberal aspirations of the time of the Wars of Liberation.

[30] The realistic, if crudely didactic, novels of Jeremias Gotthelf seem to have exerted an antiromantic influence on Keller. A separate study could be written on realism in depictions of peasant and village life, from the idylls of Gessner and Voss through the village stories of Auerbach and Immermann, the didactic tales of Gotthelf and Rosegger, the more drastic treatment which became popular after the emergence of naturalism, down to the "Blood and Soil" school of the 1930s.

His realism is modified by a pervasive optimism, and the story of the fundamentally problematic and largely frustrated Heinrich Lee remains a paradoxically cheerful one. It is not only Keller's well-known sense of humor which gives *Der grüne Heinrich* its surprisingly optimistic flavor; the Spinozistic or, better, Goethean[31] acceptance of the world is more fundamental. His attitude towards a naturalistic novella of Hermann Friedrichs is revealing:

> Was mir bei aller Korrektheit Ihrer Arbeit mangelt, ist eine gewisse gute Laune, ein gewisser Sonnenschein, eine Freiheit des Geistes, die *über* der Schrift schweben und derselben den Charakter des fleissig gelösten Pensums, der blossen Mache benehmen.[32]

While Keller does not suppress all the unpleasant aspects of reality by any means, he avoids drabness; there is always humor and color. His works abound in rich varied scenes like the account of the Munich carnival in *Der grüne Heinrich*. He was what the Germans call an *Augenmensch*, and his early attempts to become an artist seem to have had a considerable effect on his style.

In Theodor Fontane the realistic novel of the century attained a belated maturity. Keller wrote one really significant realistic novel; Fontane produced a whole *œuvre*. After developing his powers of observation as a journalist, traveler, and war correspondent, Fontane turned to the novel in his late fifties. He began as a writer of historical novels, in the tradition of Scott and Alexis, but his greatest achievement lies in a series of novels of society, set in Berlin or on the estates of the Prussian nobility. In the later novels, the influence of Flaubert, the Goncourts, and Zola is evident. Fontane had almost the ideal orientation for a realist; he was not without loyalties or commitments, but was singularly free of strong prejudices and of sentimentality, and combined keenness of eye with an ironic, detached temperament. He had a flair almost unique in German nineteenth-century literature for psychological subtleties, social nuances, and understatement; his gift for recording conversation is also unusual. Fontane's ethics are those of a humane skepticism; he describes but rarely judges. Social conventions are often treated ironically but are not directly attacked. Especially in the later works, society is accepted as it is, if a bit wryly.[33] Fontane misses greatness through an aversion to dealing with intense passion. Thus in *Effi Briest*, his finest novel, the reader is not told of the heroine's adultery until long after it has taken place; here, as elsewhere, the whole effect is deliberately muted.

---

[31] In the novel, Heinrich's reading of Goethe's works (Book III, chap. 1) stands out as one of his few positive experiences.

[32] Letter of March 16, 1884; *Briefe und Tagebücher*, ed. Ermatinger (Stuttgart-Berlin, 1919), p. 461.

[33] Ernst Rose, "Theodor Fontane's Novels and the Spirit of Old Age," *Germanic Review*, XXIII (1948), 254-262.

Fontane's characteristic theme is that of a precarious relation between the sexes: an insecure marriage destroyed by a third person, an affair between members of different social classes. "Society" triumphs, but essentially only because it is stronger; Fontane champions neither convention nor revolt; he records. He treats the Prussian aristocracy with a mixture of admiration and irony; the rich bourgeoisie more satirically, as in *Frau Jenny Treibel*; the "lower" classes on the whole with benevolence. He found a warm admirer in the young Thomas Mann, whose *Buddenbrooks* owes more to Fontane than to any other German novelist.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the influence of England on the German realistic novel is largely replaced by that of France, Russia, and Scandinavia. Bitterly opposed at first, Zola became the greatest model of the naturalistic school.[34] The novel would seem to be the naturalistic form *par excellence*; it is curious that the German wing of the movement produced no really significant novelist. Max Kretzer devoted himself largely to the treatment of the Berlin proletariat; he anticipates the so-called "consistent naturalists" in his subject matter and his social sympathies, but not in style, and only partially in intention.[35] His slice of life is heavily buttered with didactic explanations of such themes as overproduction. His most important book, *Meister Timpe: Sozialer Roman*, derives its impact from a sort of heavy symbolism: the desperate proletarian scribbles "Es lebe der Kaiser!" on the wall before he dies; the new elevated train roars over the heads of the Berlin populace. The reputation of Sudermann has been almost completely deflated. Perhaps the modest but solid achievement of Clara Viebig represents the most lasting contribution of the school.

An old charge against the naturalists is that they focused so much on the unpleasant aspects of life that their picture of reality was distorted. But the "pictures" of the German naturalists are not so much distorted as flat; their images seem accurate in a way but lack perspective. The possession of a double point of view can give a stereoscopic effect; and it is through such a double point of view, among other factors, that Thomas Mann[36] produces his amazing sense of reality. (Obviously, a dual vision can also give the impression of endless ambivalence and vacillation.) Mann's background is highly complex, but one can discern two major strains: a pessimistic, romantic, German tradition (one

[34] W. H. Root, *German Criticism of Zola, 1875-1893* (New York, 1931).

[35] Kretzer explicitly denies that he aimed at the "cold" objectivity of Zola. See his "Meine Stellung zum Naturalismus" in G. Keil, *Max Kretzer; a Study in German Naturalism* (New York, 1928), pp. 105-108.

[36] To try to deal here with the realistic aspects of the work of Schnitzler, Heinrich Mann, Döblin, or with the "New Objectivity" of the 1920s, would be, as Fontane's Herr von Briest would put it, "too wide a field."

thinks of his devotion to Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Wagner, and Theodor Storm); and the tradition of European realism and naturalism.

In *Buddenbrooks* (1900) the dichotomy is manifest in various ways. Mann appears to write as a "scientific" observer, and yet his marked obsession with death recalls the romantics of a century before; he seems to record the declining fortunes of the merchant family objectively, but his identification with the family is so close that, whenever the Buddenbrooks' bank balance sinks, the reader feels that the world is out of joint.

Buddenbrooks owes a great deal to German philosophy and music and relatively little to German literature, with the exception of Fontane. Its most striking literary debt is to the French novel. Though accepting Mann's statement that he did not know Zola while he was writing his first novel, one can still believe in an "influence"—Zola was very much in the air. Mann speaks of his great admiration for the novels of the Goncourts, especially *Renée Mauperin*, with its "lightness, successful execution, and precision."[37] Its comments on bourgeois pride, on the reign of money, on business "ideals"—one thinks of the "practical ideals" of the second Johann Buddenbrook—must have been suggestive. Such less spectacular writers as the Norwegians, Alexander Kielland and Jonas Lie, were perhaps equally useful. Kielland, like Mann, came from a cultivated patrician family; the affinity is most evident in his *Garman and Worse* (1885), which traces the decline of a rich family of shipowners. Mann's relation to Tolstoy is less clear. He testifies that *Anna Karenina* "strengthened" him while he was writing *Buddenbrooks*. The two works are so radically different that one can hardly speak of an influence; but Mann, who looked up to the Russian writer with reverence, may have learned something from Tolstoy's unhurried pace and epic breadth.

Mann's style in Buddenbrooks is of remarkable range and versatility. In many passages, one thinks of the humorous realism of an earlier generation, of Dickens or Fritz Reuter. Other passages, such as his description of a warm January day, recall the impressionist school.

> Das Pflaster war nass und schmutzig, und von den grauen Giebeln troff es. Aber darüber spannte sich der Himmel zartblau und makellos, und Milliarden von Lichtatomen schienen wie Kristalle in dem Azur zu flimmern und zu tanzen...

As the tone of the novel grows darker, towards its end, such scenes as that of Thomas Buddenbrook's collapse in the street or of Hanno's death from typhus show that Mann had little more to learn from the naturalists. Throughout, his sharpness of observation is uncanny; thus one learns that Grünlich, on his wedding day, had "put a little powder on the wart on the left side of his nose."

---

[37] *Die Forderung des Tages* (Berlin, 1930), p. 30.

Yet *Buddenbrooks* is far from naturalistic in essence; it is a carefully arranged composition. Mann's adroit use of contrast, his building up the themes of death and decay to a fortissimo, are cases in point, as is his use of the leitmotif to recall whole complexes of association. Such devices complicate what appears at first as a conventional, straightforward, unilinear novel. *Buddenbrooks*, the last great novel of the nineteenth century, foreshadows the twentieth in its technique.

As a novel of education, *Der Zauberberg* (1924) is in the tradition of *Wilhelm Meister* and *Der grüne Heinrich*. Like them also it represents, in its own way, an overcoming of the romantic spirit. As H. J. Weigand has shown in detail,[38] the novel is saturated with the ideas of German romanticism; Hans Castorp's decision to reject Naphta's cult of death signalizes Mann's shift from Wagner and Schopenhauer to a sort of Goethean humanism.

While *Der Zauberberg* is perhaps the most ambitious of German novels of ideas, one suspects that it will continue to be read primarily for its values as literature, and these are very largely realistic ones. The account of Joachim Ziemssen's death, for instance, or of Frau Stöhr and her malapropisms, show an accuracy of eye and ear which no German writer has surpassed. Mann is not content with surfaces—the description of Clavdia Chauchat's skin, like the employment of Freudian insights, provides a new dimension of depth. Mann's *Buddenbrooks* raises the German novel to the level of European realism; *Der Zauberberg*, more daring and experimental, indicates new realistic possibilities.

Yet Mann has chosen, on the whole, to exploit very different possibilities. The mythical and symbolic elements, more or less veiled in *Der Zauberberg*, predominate in his later work. Heroic figures, such as Joseph, Goethe, and Leverkühn, now interest him most, and he has become increasingly preoccupied with the timeless and the typical. Not that he has lost the gift of specific observation; certain passages in *Joseph in Ägypten*, for example, or the Munich scenes in *Dr. Faustus*, testify to the contrary; and the bold attempt, in *Lotte in Weimar*, to reproduce Goethe's stream of consciousness can be viewed as an attempt to push forward the frontiers of realism. But Mann would seem to be moving with a general current flowing from realism towards a sort of symbolism. Kafka's novels, Jünger's *Auf den Marmorklippen*, and Hesse's *Das Glasperlenspiel* show a similar tendency. Thus the German novel, which attained realistic distinction rather late, has turned in other directions. Again, of course, it is following international trends.

Columbia University

[38] *Thomas Mann's Novel Der Zauberberg* (New York and London, 1933).

REALISM IN RUSSIA

RENATO POGGIOLI

IN HIS history of Russian literature, the Polish critic and scholar Alexander Brückner has included an important passage, which we cannot quote entirely, but which can be summed up in not too many words. In the years before 1848, says Brückner, there appeared in Russia that school of writers of the forties which created the classical period or golden age of their national literature. Their tradition derived "in a straight line" from Pushkin and Gogol, but they also learned from the modern writers of the West, especially from the French Balzac and George Sand and to a lesser extent from the English Dickens. Brückner goes on to say that no other literature has ever produced, in an equally short time, so many outstanding figures. He remarks that virtually all of them broke into print between 1845 and 1847, and were granted the privilege of seeing their early writings appraised by the critical genius of Belinsky. All of them, except Tolstoy, were born between 1812 and 1823 and died between 1876 and 1883; Tolstoy was the youngest of the group and survived even its latest members by the span of half a century. One of them was a poet (Nekrasov) and another a dramatist (Ostrovsky), but all of the others were writers of imaginative prose, novelists and storytellers. With the exception of Dostoevsky, all of them were born and remained more or less disaffected children of the landed gentry. (To supplement Brückner's statement, we may add that the majority of them came from the Tuscany of Great Russia, which lies to the south of Moscow, around the provincial capital of Tula, not far from which Tolstoy was born.) Brückner proceeds to lay down a series of generalizations about the common traits of their literary work, from the standpoint of both style and content; but he does not mention the term "realism" in his characterization of that group of writers who are generally labeled as Russian "realists."[1]

There are several things to be learned from this statement. First of all, we learn that there are obvious chronological and historical, cultural and psychological, social and political, geographical and even regional ties, besides the purely literary ones, connecting such writers as Aksakov, Turgenev, Goncharov, Saltykov, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, Leskov, and

[1] Aleksander Brückner, *Historija Literatury Rosyiskiej* (Lwow-Warszawa-Krakow, 1922), II, 15-16.

tutti quanti. We learn, furthermore, that they are the Russian classics *par excellence*—a conclusion which Western literary opinion is all too ready to accept, against the best judgment of its Russian counterpart. For ourselves, we are interested in them not so much as "classics" but as "realists." This is why our first problem is to reconcile the apparent contradiction in Brückner's statement that they derive "in a straight line" from Pushkin and Gogol, a "classic" and a "realist" who are excluded from the group. Our second problem is equally determined by what is implied in Brückner's characteristics. His chronological limits and the names he omits suggest that the Polish critic fails to recognize as realists, or, to approximate his terminology, as "classical realists," the none the less realistic writers of the following generations, for instance Chekhov and Gorky, not to speak of an author like Ivan Bunin who, as will readily be admitted, belongs to a different breed.

Before opening our inquiry, it is only fair to acknowledge that we are inclined to accept the position of Brückner at its face value; and that we find at least partial support for doing so in the opinion of other Russian and foreign critics. In his literary history, which is the standard work in English, Prince Mirsky separates the "age of Gogol" from the "age of realism," and deals with Chekhov and Gorky in the chapters following an introduction entitled "The End of a Great Age."[2] In his book of essays on European and Russian realism, the Hungarian Marxist critic Lukács quite significantly fails to deal directly with Gogol, and treats him merely as the subject matter of investigations by those whom he calls the leaders of Russian democratic criticism. It is perhaps even more significant, even if such an omission is due to reasons of quite a different order, that Lukács finds no place in his book for the "idealistic" genius of Dostoevsky, whose absence is made more meaningful by the compulsory presence of Gorky, as the master of "socialist realism." But, when ideological considerations cease to operate, literary discrimination starts working again; and it is on the strength of critical considerations that, along with Gogol, Chekhov is excluded too.[3]

In terms of literary history, and within the range of a perspective broader than the purely Russian, our double task will be to define the two sets of relations which, at opposite ends, distinguish Russian realism from romanticism and from naturalism. In the first case, we shall test Brückner's affirmation that the Russian classical realists derive "in a straight line" from Pushkin and Gogol; in the second, we shall see in what sense they differ from both late realists and naturalists, in Russia and abroad. The criticism of nineteenth-century Russia

[2] D. S. Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York, 1949).

[3] George Lukács, *Studies in European Realism*, trans. by Edith Bone (London, 1950).

denied the romantic label to Pushkin on the basis of his "realism"; while several recent critics, especially the Formalists, have denied him the same label on the basis of his "classicism." And, at least in one case, this has been done by using the epithet "classical" not only as a standard of judgment but also as a historical concept, defining the aesthetic values of an age previously considered as devoid of any lasting aesthetic merit, that is, Russian eighteenth-century classicism. This opinion has been stated by Boris Eikhenbaum in the following words:

> Pushkin's admirers are wrong when they try to exalt him by considering his apparition on the horizon of Russian poetry as an unexpected one. Pushkin is not the beginning, but the end of the long road travelled by Russian poetry in the eighteenth century... Having absorbed within himself all the poetic traditions of the eighteenth century—a century so rich in activity and achievement for Russian art—Pushkin was able to create a high canon, classical in its equilibrium and apparent facility. He had no followers, nor could he have any, because art cannot live on a canon alone.[4]

The denial of the existence of a Pushkinian tradition is a commonplace; what is paradoxical is the affirmation that this was due not to what was new but to what was old in Pushkin's work. In reality, part of the Pushkinian heritage remained alive, and affected the development of Russian literature more than Eikhenbaum and the critics sharing his view are prepared to admit. Notwithstanding their view, and however strange it may seem, what remained alive was not the romantic but the eighteenth-century strain of Pushkin's art. And this was not merely the result of what one might call Russia's "cultural lag." As a matter of fact, it is exactly this conservative side of Pushkin's genius that has been all too often confused with his supposed "realism."

The ambiguity does not make Pushkin less of a romantic, historically speaking; rather, it makes him a complex figure of whom one could say, as Friedrich Schlegel once said of Goethe, that he was at the same time the Shakespeare and the Voltaire of his own nation and time. As far as his narrative work is concerned, and neglecting the too obvious example of such an "extravagant" piece as his *Gavriliada*, it is easy to see how near it is to the literary ideal of the French eighteenth-century *roman*; even his more romantic tales are written in the dry and lucid style of Voltaire's *contes philosophiques*. This perhaps may explain why such work was able to attract, to the point of translating from it, such French masters as Mérimée and Gide. As for *Evgeni Onegin*, it reminds us of the verse tales of that very writer whose ultraromantic ideas it makes fun of. But let us not forget that *Don Juan*, even if less poetic than Pushkin's "novel in verse," is not less full of "wit," and that Byron

[4] In the essay "Problemy Poetiki Pushkina" (The Problems of Pushkin's Poetics).

was an admirer of Pope and his art. It is not as a realist in the making, but rather as a romantic of the moderate wing, still in love with eighteenth-century *esprit* and *clarté*, that Pushkin criticizes in his masterpiece "that obscure and weak style which we call romanticism." It is from the same standpoint that, in another passage of the same work, he protests against "the garbage of the Flemish school"—in brief, against the vulgar realistic whims of that school which the French call *bas romantisme*. This is the kind of Pushkinian ideal that remained alive in Russian literature, especially among those writers whom after all it is proper and right to designate, for this very reason, as "classical realists."

In other words, the Pushkinian tradition failed to influence Russian classical realism exactly in its most important historical component, which was romanticism itself. The same can be said in the case of Gogol, a master whom Russian criticism has always treated unhistorically, and who, owing to the falsity of this perspective, has not yet been placed where he properly belongs. It is only recently that Russian scholarship has rightly evaluated the relevance of the traditional elements in Gogol's work—for instance, his gusto for the picaresque novel, his kinship with such authors as Lesage, Smollett, Fielding, and Sterne, and the very eighteenth-century quality of his conception of Cervantes' masterpiece, as shown by the attempt to give a modern equivalent of *Don Quixote* in *Dead Souls*.

It is this failure to understand Gogol's connection not only with preromantic, but also with romantic literature (for instance, his debt to Hoffmann), that has created a series of misunderstandings about Gogol as a realist. Up to the end of the last century, critics used to believe in the absolute modernity and authenticity of Gogol's realism, and no one would have argued Chernyshevsky's characterization as "the Gogolian age in Russian literature" of what was merely its post-Gogolian period. This view was bound to provoke a chain reaction in the opposite direction. Starting with the end of the century, a host of critics, led by Rozanov and Bryusov, later followed by others up to the straggler Andrey Bely, discovered the presence of an extreme romantic strain in Gogol's work, but failed to recognize the historical roots of that strain. Unable, as they were, to admit that a romantic realism could be possible, they postulated the existence of a Gogolian "idealism" or "supernaturalism," which they anachronistically appraised as an anticipation of the aesthetic and mystical revival of their time—the age of Russian Symbolism. But, in spite of their errors, they were quite right in concluding that Russian classical realism had been to a great extent a denial of Gogol's work rather than a continuation of it.

From this viewpoint, we can therefore safely assert that the famous statement by Dostoevsky—"We are all pieces from Gogol's *Overcoat*"

—applies, and there only in part, solely to Dostoevsky himself. What the Russian classical realists refused to accept from Gogol's heritage was what was romantic in it, a fact which Dostoevsky ought to have understood, since no Russian was a harsher critic of romanticism than he. It is true that the portrait of the Russian romantics he gives in the *Notes from Underground* is moral and psychological rather than cultural or literary, a mordant satire which perhaps must be ascribed to the hero of his tale, rather than to Dostoevsky himself. Yet even in this context he is still worth quoting:

> We Russians, speaking generally, have never had those foolish transcendental "romantics"—German, and still more French—on whom nothing produces any effect... The characteristics of our "romantics" are absolutely and directly opposed to the transcendental European type, and no European standards can be applied to them... The characteristics of our romantic are to understand everything, *to see everything and to see it often incomparably more clearly than our most realistic minds see it*...[5]

We realize that in this ambiguous statement Dostoevsky means to say that Russian romantic psychology is not idealistic but realistic, in the practical and negative sense of the word; yet we cannot help feeling that his condemnation could be validly extended to include cultural and literary romanticism also. The satirical character of this portrait does not detract from its truth; and perhaps it is not too farfetched to suggest that the model for this caricature may have been Gogol himself, either the man or the writer or both.[6]

It was of course to another Gogol that Dostoevsky referred when he spoke of the debt of gratitude that he and the Russian writers of his generation felt they owed to the author of *The Overcoat*. There he spoke, literally, of the author of that piece, and that piece alone. In a certain sense even Belinsky, who is more responsible than anybody else for the dubious theory that Gogol is the father of Russian realism, based his own opinion on little more than *The Overcoat*, plus a few generalizations by Gogol himself, such as the famous pages in *Dead Souls* where the poet apologizes for evoking, instead of noble heroes and lofty ideals, the vulgarity of life and the meanness of man. Belinsky believed that Russian reality was the real object of Gogol's contemplation, and that Gogol represented the ugliness of that reality not only to exalt it to the beauty of art but also to help his readers to change it. Belinsky also

[5] *Notes from Underground*, II (quoted as translated by Constance Garnett). The italics are Dostoevsky's.

[6] The guess is not as wild as it may seem, in view of the claim of the Russian critic, Yuri Tynianov, that Gogol was the model for the hypocrite Foma Fomich (the protagonist of *The Manor of Stepanchikovo*, translated into English as *The Friend of the Family*). This is supported by passages from the text of that tale and by speeches of Foma Fomich, which are reminiscent of Gogol's statements in the *Excerpts from the Correspondence with his Friends*.

assigned this very program to those writers whom he gathered under the banner of what he called "the natural school." But the program cannot be attributed to Gogol; nor can it be fully or literally applied even to those masters of Russian classical realism who were aware of the social mission of art, but unable to interpret it with the narrow-minded dogmatism and the fanatic zeal of those radical critics who were Belinsky's offspring. That conception was far more easily accepted by a few minor writers of the golden age and by such neorealists as Chekhov and Gorki. No better restatement of Belinsky's ideal can be found than in these Chekhovian words: "My goal is to kill two birds with one stone: to paint life in its true aspects, and to show how far life falls short of the ideal life . . ."[7]

This is what has often been called the "tendenciousness" of Russian literature—a tendenciousness different in quality but of no less intensity than romantic or aesthetic tendenciousness, which causes the work of the artist to be all too often an *apologia pro vita sua*. It is essentially in this kind of tendenciousness that the classical realists refused to follow Gogol's example, as they failed to imitate him in his attempt to humiliate life for the profit of art—an attempt which produced two of Gogol's idiosyncrasies, his fondness for an "ornamental style" and his gusto for "purple passages."

It is from the standpoint of their respective conceptions of art that we may also differentiate the Russian classical realists from the late realists and the naturalists. Practically all the great Russian masters were unfriendly, not only toward those trends which later developed into Zolaesque naturalism, but also toward the aims and methods of Flaubert, the Goncourts, and the writers of the second generation of French realism. They reacted against the latter primarily for literary reasons, through their own inability to accept the theory and practice of *écriture artiste*. This does not mean that they were indifferent to problems of craftsmanship; nothing could be farther from the truth. But they were less conscious and articulate in this regard than their French contemporaries. The vague and not too intense quality of the Russian concern with style may be assessed by reference to the connotations later assigned, in the language of prerevolutionary Russia, to the adjective "artistic," which was used as a term of praise in journalistic and conversational criticism. A suggestive definition of its meaning is given by Mirsky. After stating that the word was typically suggestive of the mild "aesthetic" reaction of the eighties, Mirsky goes on to observe of the writers of the decade:

[7] From a letter to A. N. Pleshcheev, written on April 9, 1889. Quoted as translated by S. S. Koteliansky and Leonard Woolf in *The Personal Papers of Anton Chekhov* (New York, 1948), p. 150.

They reverted to the examples of Turgénev and Tolstóy, and tried to be what is called in Russian *khudózhestvenny*. This word really means "artistic," but owing to the use to which it was put by the idealist critics of the forties (Belínsky), it has a very different emotional "overtone" from its English equivalent. Among other things, it conveyed to the late-nineteenth-century Russian *"intelligént"* a certain mellowness and lack of crudeness, an absence of too-apparent "purpose," and also an absence of intellectual elements—of logic and "reflection." It was also colored by Belínsky's doctrine that the essence of "art" was "thinking in images," not in concepts. This idea is partly responsible for the great honor in which descriptions of visible things were held—especially emotionally colored descriptions of nature in the style of Turgénev.[8]

This peculiar interpretation of what is "artistic" resulted in a vague conception of style as well as a loose conception of form. The Russian writer of fiction is far less interested than his Western counterpart in the structure of his novel or story. This is true even of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy—the former being led so often to imbalance, not only by his hectic method of composition but also by the excessive demands of the "idea"; the latter as classically perfect as a writer can be and able to create, almost unconsciously and effortlessly, works giving the impression not of artifacts but of natural organisms. This relative indifference to the pre-established harmony of a structural design is revealed, almost symbolically, by the frequence of narrative works containing in their titles the word *zapisky*, which, as the translations of those titles, into English show, means "notes," "sketches," "memoirs"—and which perhaps has no other equivalent in any Western language but the German *Aufzeichnungen*.[9] The word suggests that the written work aims at being nothing more than a series of *impressions vécues*, devoid of any organization or plan, and that the writer feels that his task is to reproduce his real experiences in their freshness and immediacy, with the artistic informality of a first and unrevised draft. This shows the presence in Russian realism of an impressionistic trend, antedating the conscious impressionism of such later realists as Daudet and Maupassant or in Russia of such a writer as Chekhov, whom Tolstoy himself defined as an "impressionist." It shows also a relative indifference to narrative interest and plot structure, a characteristic which, according to Mirsky, anticipates some of the methods of modern fiction in the West, as exemplified in the works of James, Proust, and Joyce.[10]

The relative neglect of the claims of structure and form was more than a mere matter of taste, and was due to other reasons in addition to purely literary ones. The great Russian masters felt that an excessive

[8] Mirsky, *op cit.*, p. 334.

[9] Practically all the narrative works by Sergey Aksakov are entitled *Zapisky*. More famous in the West are Gogol's *Zapisky Sumadsheshchago* (Memoirs of a Madman), Turgenev's *Zapisky Okhotnika* (A Sportsman's Sketches), Dostoevsky's *Zapisky iz Mertvago Doma* (Memoirs from the House of the Dead) and *Zapisky iz Podpolya* (Notes from Underground).

[10] Mirsky, *op. cit.*, p. 171.

emphasis on style and form could lead to aestheticism, in other words, to an attitude of moral neutrality toward the content of art, to the *impassibilité* of the "art for art's sake" movement and the Parnassian school. The same tendency could lead also to naturalism or to a cynical curiosity for what is morbid and sordid in life, to a morbidity and a sordidness which can perhaps be redeemed aesthetically through the perfection or fidelity of the representation but which remain ethically unredeemed. Even worse, the cult of style and form, which, like any idolatry, exalts the means at the expense of the ends, could lead to decadentism, that is, to a perverse predilection for all that is sickly and unhealthy in the texture of life and in the condition of man. We find frequent warnings against such dangers from the pens of the masters of the Russian golden age; but the warnings are almost always qualified by the feeling that, while those dangers are threatening the fabric of Western realism, they have not yet sensibly affected its Russian counterpart. Such is the position taken by Goncharov, in a passage which remained unpublished up to a few years ago, where he claims that extreme realism is not realism at all. After having declared that for him realism means an aesthetic quality universally and permanently valid, equally shared by all the masters of ancient and modern art, the author of *Oblomov* denies the presence of that quality in the movement which takes that term as its name: "Realism is one of the main bases of art, but not that realism which the latest school abroad and even in this country is preaching . . ."[11]

Goncharov is rightly considered the most typical representative of what one might call the right wing of Russian classical realism, and such a statement is not surprising from him. It is, however, highly significant that the same position was taken by Saltykov-Shchedrin, the "Menippean satirist" of Russian realism and the author of *The Family Golovlyov*, a novel generally considered as the extreme manifestation of the naturalistic trend in classical Russian literature. What is even more significant is that Saltykov-Shchedrin protested vigorously against that curiosity for the morbid and the sordid which he finds typical of the French realists of his own time:

> The extent of our realism is different from that of the modern school of French realists. We include under this heading the whole man, in all the variety of his definitions and actuality; the French for the most part interest themselves in the torso, and of the whole variety of his definitions dwell with greater enjoyment in his physical abilities and amorous feats.[12]

[11] From the piece entitled "Better Late Than Never," in Goncharov's *Literaturno-Kriticheskie Stati i Pisma* (Essays and Letters, Literary and Critical), ed. A. P. Rybasov (Leningrad, 1938), p. 187.

[12] Quoted as translated by Ivy Litvinov in Mikhail Alpatov's *The Russian Impact on Art* (New York, 1950), pp. 228-229.

The last words of this statement remind us of one of the best-known qualities of Russian fiction: its purity, chastity, even prudery. We shall reconsider this, not without qualifications or reservations, when we discuss further the manner in which Dostoevsky and Tolstoy dealt with it and with those sides of human experience which were made objects of special attention in the writings of the naturalists. In the meanwhile we can say that, from the standpoint of its attitude toward sex, Russian realistic fiction seems nearer to its English than to its French equivalent. This explains the lack of interest, on the part of his Russian peers, in the work of Zola, who as a pamphleteer and an essayist was granted such a generous reception by the Russian literary press. Furthermore, the relative sexual innocence of the great Russian masters differentiates them not only from the naturalists and late realists but also from Stendhal and Balzac. Stendhal and Balzac, however, were interested in "the amorous animal" because they were interested, to use Saltykov's phrase, "in the whole man"; and in this regard Dostoevsky and Tolstoy were as "adult" as Stendhal and Balzac. Thanks to the wholeness of their vision of man, the classics of Russian realism are perhaps more entitled than their French contemporaries to be considered the progeny of Stendhal and Balzac. This was clearly seen and forcefully stated by George Lukács, for whom naturalism and even late realism are not the development or continuation but rather the corruption or degradation of early realism. For this very reason, Lukács is led to affirm: "The true heirs of the French novel, so gloriously begun early in the last century, were not Flaubert and especially Zola, but the Russian and Scandinavian writers of the second half of the century . . ."[13]

Russian realism was prevented from degenerating into biological naturalism, which contemplates only part of "the whole man," not only by its acceptance of a social mission or content, as Lukács claims, but even more by its willingness to set definite moral restraints upon the artist, upon art, upon realism itself. Goncharov, for instance, used Oblomov as a mouthpiece to record his own protest against "the realistic direction in literature," which according to him had replaced that invisible "laughter through tears" recommended by Gogol with the "all too visible sneer" of a new hatred. Probably what Goncharov had in mind was the *odium theologicum* preached by the critical realists[13a] and practiced by their literary disciples; yet his statement has a greater validity than a merely polemical one. His words reveal fully that Rus-

[13] *Op. cit.*, preface, p. 5.

[13a] By this term I mean the radical critics, some of whom chose to call themselves "realists." In this use, I differ from the terminology of Marxist and Soviet literary criticism, according to which the "critical realists" are the classics of Russion and European realism, who criticized prerevolutionary reality, while the practitioners of postrevolutionary "socialist realism" are supposed to glorify it.

sian realism aimed at exercising a power of moral discrimination in the field of psychology, considered both as the object and as the subject of art—on man both as the model and as the author of man's portrait.

As Goncharov's protest against naturalistic "hatred" easily shows, Russian realism accepts its own limitations not merely in the area of sex but also in the area of cruelty. If the former is always covered by the veil of chastity, the latter is always covered by the veil of pity. This is less true of Dostoevsky, as we shall see when we consider the peculiarities of his case. But, generally, all the scenes of cruelty which we find in Russian fiction are contemplated from the viewpoint of the victim, without decadent complacency or Dostoevskian ambiguity. Nothing is more significant in this regard than the famous episode in *War and Peace*, when Rostopchin, the governor of Moscow, delivers the poor wretch Vereshchagin to the mob, as a scapegoat or a sacrificial lamb. In spite of the epic detachment of the narration, no reader can fail to notice that the writer aims to suggest a parallel between Rostopchin and Pontius Pilate, Vereshchagin and Jesus Christ. *Ecce homo*: these words would be a fitting epigraph for the scene.

As a matter of fact, Tolstoy a few years later had the opportunity to define clearly his position in regard to that kind of realism which claims the absolute right of the artist as an observer and a painter of reality, while denying any value to the human reality observed and painted by him. This was when he protested publicly at the report that the famous painter Vereshchagin (what a strange coincidence of names!) had requested the military authority to schedule the execution of two condemned men at such a time as to enable the artist to make a study of their agony.[14] How Tolstoy's position differs from the conception of Ortega y Gasset, who defines the artistic faculty as the ability to draw the portrait of a man on his deathbed! No Russian writer, not even the tortured and torturing Dostoevsky, could ever accept such a view of art, even of realistic art, as an aesthetic or scientific *experientia in corpore vili*! Not even Vereshchagin himself would have accepted that view. He was held, and certainly regarded himself, as the master of realistic painting in Russia, and, during a series of exhibitions of his works which took place in the United States, he published in English translation a pamphlet entitled *Realism*. There we can read the follow-

[14] The episode is thus summed up in the most famous biography of Tolstoy in English: "The passage of Vereshchagin's *Memoirs*, where that artist mentions persuading General Strukov to hasten the hanging of two Turks that he might sketch the execution, aroused Tolstoy's profound indignation." Aylmer Maude, *The Life of Tolstoy* (Tolstoy Centenary Edition, London, 1930), II, 20. This happened in 1879 and must be referred to the then still recent Russian-Turkish War. Shortly after, Tolstoy expressed his protest in the preface he wrote for Ershov's *Recollections of Sevastopol*, which in the same centenary edition has been used as a kind of introduction to Tolstoy's far earlier *Sevastopol*.

ing passage, proving that even for him there is no true art, no true realism, when the work fails to carry a meaning or to convey a sense of value:

> I... assert that in cases where there exists but a bare representation of a fact or of an event without idea, without generalization, there can possibly be found some qualities of realistic execution, but of realism there could be none: of that intelligent realism, I mean, which is built on observation and on facts—in opposition to idealism, which is founded on impressions and affirmations, established *a priori*.[15]

"Idealism" and "cruelty" are, of course, two of Dostoevsky's provinces, as has been held in the first case by many of his mystical and metaphysical critics, and in the second by the definition of his genius, in the title of Mikhailovsky's essay, as "a cruel talent." But the "idealist" remains a "realist," and the "cruel talent" is mitigated by that compassion which is part of its make-up. What prevented Dostoevsky from falling into the pitfalls of naturalistic cruelty was not only his distaste for that school, so clearly manifested by the fact that Dimitri Karamazov makes fun of Claude Bernard, the scientific positivist of whom Zola considered himself the disciple in the literary field. What had already prevented him from becoming a naturalist in his youth was his sensational and melodramatic taste, his gusto for situations and tensions that reminds us not so much of Balzac and Zola as of Eugène Sue. All his masterpieces are transcendental sublimations of the early nineteenth-century "thriller" or *roman-feuilleton*. It is for this very reason that Dostoevsky's realism, unlike Turgenev's or Tolstoy's, is never "middle of the road" realism. He was aware of this fact, as a passage from one of his letters clearly shows:

> I have my own special view of reality in art; what the majority call almost fantastic and exceptional signifies for me the very essence of reality. In my opinion, the commonness of the manifestations and the public view of them are not at all realism, but quite the contrary. In every issue of a newspaper you meet accounts of real facts and amazing happenings. For our writers these are fantastic; they are not concerned with them; nevertheless, they are reality, because they are *facts!*[16]

This implies that true but exceptional events are the stuff Dostoevsky's fiction is made of, that his imagination thrives on what is ordinary and extraordinary at the same time. That he remained always faithful to such a conception of reality and art is attested by the piece in *The Diary of a Writer*, where he discusses an episode in Tolstoy's *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth*. It is the story of a resentful child, who

[15] *Realism*, by Vassili Verestchagin [*sic*] (Philadelphia, 1899), p. 5.

[16] *Pisma* (Letters), in the Dolinin edition, II, 169-170. Quoted as translated by Ernest J. Simmons, in his *Dostoevski: The Making of a Novelist* (New York, 1940), p. 154.

dreams of revenging himself on his parents by committing suicide. The plan fails to materialize, and remains merely a wishful thought. Dostoevsky quotes again, almost triumphantly, the newspaper account of how a real child, in similar circumstances, ended by taking the fatal step. The implication is that as a writer he would have followed, not the path taken by Tolstoy, but that indicated by life itself.

Of course we know that Tolstoy did not limit himself to the evocation of what is common and average, habitual and daily, in the existence of man. Nor did his realism keep to the middle of the road. This is especially true of those works of his middle and late period, which were all tragedies of sex or, as he would have said, "tragedies of the bedroom": *The Power of Darkness*, *The Kreutzer Sonata*, *The Devil*, and *Father Sergius*. The first of these works, as is well known, was in its day considered the masterpiece of naturalistic drama, and was performed for the first time on the stage of Antoine's Théâtre Libre under Zola's sponsorship. And yet how it differs, as do all of Tolstoy's other works of its kind, from such a piece as *Thérèse Raquin*! The gulf separating them is the difference between the ethical realism of Tolstoy and the biological naturalism of the French master.

For historical and psychological reasons, only such a belated writer as Chekhov could be affected by the strain of naturalism. It will suffice to cite as an example such a story as *Mud*, which Chekhov defended against a lady's disapproval in this fashion: "To a chemist nothing on earth is unclean. A writer must be as objective as a chemist; he must abandon the subjective line; he must know that dunghills play a very respectable part in a landscape, and that evil passions are as inherent in life as good ones."[17] The Zolaesque flavor is unmistakable; note the parallel between the tasks of the artist and the scientist and the metaphor of the dunghill. Such words would be inconceivable from the pen of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, or any one of the classical realists, though we could very easily imagine Gorky having written them. Yet, even in Chekhov's art, there is no resolute attempt to reduce the manifestations of human existence to inhuman "still lives," to cut them cruelly into *tranches de vie*. On the contrary, one could say of Chekhov what Baudelaire had to say of himself in a poem which he left unfinished; after having stated, with the same image as Chekhov's that he had done his duty *comme un parfait chimiste* (to which he added: *et comme une âme sainte*), he concluded with this line:

On m'a donné la boue et j'en ai fait de l'or.

Whether or not there is the impure mud of life in the works of the masters of Russian realism, we find almost always the pure gold of art.

[17] From the letter to Madame Kiseleva, of Jan. 14, 1887; *op. cit.*, note 7 above, p. 130.

Yet these writers would never have dared to exalt beauty as highly as Baudelaire or even Flaubert so frequently did. Generally speaking, and with very few exceptions, exemplified by Pushkin and his Pleiad and by the Decadents and the Symbolists, the literary artists of Russia—especially the classical realists—were always led to treat the beautiful as iconoclasts rather than idolaters. The word "beauty" is rarely found in the prose of imaginative writers during the classical age, and when it appears, as in Tolstoy's *What is Art?*, it is no less mistreated than in the utilitarian philippics of the "critical realists." Perhaps the only two great Russian masters who meditated deeply upon the idea of beauty were Pushkin and Dostoevsky. The object of their meditation, however, was beauty not as an aesthetic and artificial product but as a physical and natural phenomenon, as a grace and a wonder in life and man. Both tried to penetrate its miracle, only to conclude that beauty was too great a mystery for the human mind. There is a famous poem of Pushkin in which the poet recalls a vision that haunted him as a school child:

> Two wonderful beings fascinated me with their beauty: they were two demon's faces. One, a Delphic idol, was a youthful visage: severe, full of awful pride, he breathed the sense of an unearthly power. The other, an ideal of feminine semblance, passionate and deceptive, was a charming genius, false but beautiful...[18]

It was perhaps from these lines that Dostoevsky derived his own idea of the duality and duplicity of beauty, stated at least twice in his novels. When General Epanchin shows the portrait of Nastasya Filipovna to the protagonist of *The Idiot*, that sudden revelation of feminine beauty leads Prince Myshkin to declare that beauty is an ambiguous and ambivalent value, containing in itself the opposite alternatives of good and evil. And in *The Brothers Karamazov* Dimitri thus confesses to Aliosha the true nature of his passion for Grushenka: "Beauty is a terrible and awful thing! It is terrible because it has not been fathomed and never can be fathomed, for God sets us nothing but riddles. Here the boundaries meet and all contradictions exist side by side..."[19]

It was perhaps because he shared this view of beauty—"beyond good and evil"—that Tolstoy ended by blaspheming its very name. Yet in his youth he held that beauty was sacred, as a vessel is sacred for containing within itself a holy thing. There is a passage in one of his early works where he considers beauty as a value derived from the higher value of truth, which in its turn he treats as a synonym for goodness. It occurs in the Sevastopol sketches: "The hero of my tale, whom I

[18] Closing lines of the poem: "V nachale zhizni shkolu pomnyu ya" (In the beginning of life I remember the school).

[19] *The Brothers Karamazov*, Part I, Book III, chap. 1. Quoted as translated by Constance Garnett.

love with all the power of my soul, whom I have tried to portray in all its beauty, who has been, is, and will be beautiful, is truth."[20] Nothing could be more conventional than this identification of the true, the good, and the beautiful, which is both a *locus communis* and a *locus classicus* of traditional aesthetic thought; yet the commonplace is made fresh and green by the new ground from which it springs. That new ground is Tolstoy's realism, which could be defined as the "realism of the heart."

Dostoevsky's aesthetic generalizations, of course, contain more and deeper insights. In a youthful article upon the art of painting, Dostoevsky unfolds his theory of realism, revealing also his method as a realist; and what he recommends and represents could be defined as the "realism of the spirit." He states that the artist must look at nature realistically, but not photographically, with the human eye rather than with a camera lens. And, since man looks at the world also with the vision of his mind, he discovers in reality more than meets the eye. The article ends with these words: "In antiquity one would have said that man must look not only with his physical sight, but also with the eye of the soul, with sight of the spirit."[21]

To be sure, there is no great art without "second sight," a principle which is equally valid for all the masters of Russian realism. Yet that "second sight" is generally of a less mystical kind, and this applies especially to an artist such as Tolstoy. The quality of this difference may be effectively suggested by referring to a simple episode in Tolstoy's first literary work. It is the scene in *Childhood* where the author describes the pastimes of his childish hero in his family circle:

> We children brought papers, pencils, and paints, and arranged ourselves at the round table in order to draw. I had only blue paint; but for all that, I took it into my head to draw a hunting scene. Having very vividly depicted a blue boy on a blue horse, and blue dogs, I was in doubt whether one could paint a blue hare, and ran into papa's study to consult him. Papa was reading something, and in answer to my question whether there were blue hares, replied, "Yes, my dear, there are," without raising his head.[22]

The "second sight" of Tolstoyan realism, or of Russian realism in general, may perhaps be recognized in this faculty of perceiving hares that are both blue and true. Of course, not all artists see and paint blue; Gogol, for instance, colors everything in gray, especially the human figure. One could apply to all of his characters the description he made in *The Portrait* of the people living in a forgotten section of Moscow: "all those people who, in a single word, one could define as ashen-colored . . ." In the Rembrant-like chiaroscuro of Dostoevsky,

[20] *Sevastopol in May 1855* (Constance Garnett's translation).
[21] From an 1861 article on "The Exhibition at the Academy of Fine Arts."
[22] *Childhood*, XI ("What Went On in the Study and the Drawing Room"). Quoted as translated by Constance Garnett.

all the heroes are clothed in black, and his world is dominated by the color symbolic of death.[23] As we well know from the protagonist of *The Overcoat*, from so many Dostoevskian and Tolstoyan characters, from all the humble heroes of Russian classical fiction, "the whole of Russian literature" consists of the attempt to perceive and to express—as D. H. Lawrence would say—"the phenomenal corruscation of the soul of quite commonplace people."[24] This is why even the gray and black people end by radiating all the colors of the rainbow. There is more than blue hares in the splendid gallery of Russian realism.

Harvard University

[23] That Dostoevsky's world is dominated by the symbolism of black is shown by the very surname of the Karamazov. *Kara* is a Tartar word meaning "black," while the corresponding Russian adjective is *cherny*. To make certain that the meaning contained in the etymology of the surname is not lost on his readers, Dostoevsky reveals its symbolical allusion indirectly, within the framework of the conventions of realism, through a slip of the tongue, made by the half-witted wife of Captain Snegiriov, when she addresses Aliosha as "Mr. Chernomazov."

[24] The statement was made in an unpublished preface for one of his translations from the Italian novelist, Giovanni Verga, printed for the first time in *Phoenix: The Collected Papers of D. H. Lawrence.*

REALISM IN AMERICA

BERNARD R. BOWRON, JR.

THEODORE DREISER, a man who had good reason to dramatize his own role in American literature, liked to think of the development of our realism as a struggle between the forces of light and darkness—the uncompromising author versus philistine respectability and evasion. Such a flattering image of the "realist" gives us a useful hint that there was, after all, something of a romantic impulse at work within a literary movement supposedly dedicated to hard facts. But, as a description of the rise of realism, it is simply not true. Most of our nineteenth-century realists shared with their audience and their critics an American way of looking at an American world, which caused them to resist many of the implications of realism even when they most consciously advocated it.

Realism, which must accept suffering and squalor and indignity on at least equal terms with their opposites, ran against the American grain. It had to contend with a myth. And what made that contest doubly difficult was that the myth was by no means merely the expression of wishful thinking. William Dean Howells, after all, was not our first writer to observe that "the more smiling aspects of life . . . are the more American," nor to believe quite literally that "the American who chooses to enjoy his birthright to the full, lives in a world wholly different . . . he breathes a rarefied and nimble air full of shining possibilities and radiant promises." Nathaniel Hawthorne had anticipated the first of these pronouncements years before: "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow . . . no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land." And at about the same time Walt Whitman, as if taking his cue from the political orators of the day, was pumping into his verses a "nimble air full of shining possibilities."

Nineteenth-century America seemed, if one did not look too deeply, to justify such beliefs. Most Americans did not bother to look very deeply. The wide diffusion of "a commonplace prosperity" (so unparalleled an historical fact that millions upon millions of European immigrants succumbed to its magnetism) gave the United States a very

smiling aspect indeed. Here even the down-and-outer could hope for a change of luck. It would be a long time before the promise of American life would be called into question by the Wobblies' rude battle song about "pie in the sky." Meanwhile, the American myth and the American fact appeared to coincide—especially if one belonged to the up-and-coming middle class. And, of course, like Howells, most of our nineteenth-century writers did belong to that class. And so did their audience. Such an audience found realism unpalatable, unless it limited itself to an endless repetition of the not unrepresentative success story and threw in, for good measure, plenty of moral uplift that was perhaps less representative.

Yet a realistic literature did get a foothold in America in the later nineteenth century, and it was largely a native growth rather than a European import. How, against such odds, it managed to develop at all, and how those odds gave it its peculiar shape are the questions which this essay will try to answer.

In an examination of American realism, the first difficulty is one of definition. Of course, considered abstractly, "realism" is a slippery term anyway—as Mr. Levin amply demonstrates in his introduction to this symposium. In nations where literature involves schools and manifestoes, one can discover at least a core of agreed-upon concepts and literary models around which to organize a working definition of the term. America is not such a nation. Here, where individualism seems to have been even more the rule among writers than among men of business, we have never really had a "school" of realism. It would be unwise to say, without many a qualification, that we have even had a "movement." Literary realism, like so much else in our pragmatic civilization, grew up by accumulation rather than by design. And, since it developed in association with a variety of nonliterary impulses (regional self-discovery, concern over shifts in the economic structure, political reform movements, and so on), one is strongly tempted to talk not about American realism but about American realisms.

We are to deal, then, not with a theory and a movement, but with a process of growth. With this distinction firmly in mind, it is possible —by hindsight—to formulate the course of realism in America. Taking a very general view of our literature, one finds that realism divides itself into two main stages of development, just as in Europe. The conventional terms for these stages, realism and naturalism, do not, however, apply as neatly in Americe as in Europe, since American "naturalists" (with the confused exception of Frank Norris) were no more consistently writing from a theory than most of the "realists" who preceded them. Not for clarity's sake, to be sure, but rather to avoid giving the false impression of a distinction that does not clearly exist,

it will be better to label these earlier and later modes "realism" and "new realism." Dreiser himself, whose name everybody now automatically associates with naturalism, found the term "realism" more congenial. He used it in his introduction to Norris's *McTeague* to "place" the novels Henry Fuller was writing about Chicago in the early 1890s:

> Crane was not the pioneer nor even the equal in any sense of the man who led the van of realism in America. That honour—if any American will admit it to be such—goes to Henry B. Fuller, who as early as 1886 [actually 1895] published *With the Procession*, as sound and agreeable a piece of American realism as that decade, or any since, produced.

Dreiser has his dates and titles mixed up; but he is absolutely right in his feeling that Fuller's novels represented the opening of a decisive break out of the circumscribed world of Howellsian fiction. He appears also to have realized that, however decisive, the break was not clear-cut. Hence his use, in a new frame of reference, of the old label, which—by implication—he applies not only to the work of Fuller but to his own as well. In view of the confused content of American "naturalism," there is a lot to be said for Dreiser's avoidance of the term. And he is intuitively right, too, in placing the advent of our "new realism" somewhere around the beginning of the nineties, when not only Fuller but Hamlin Garland, Harold Frederic, and Stephen Crane appeared on the scene.

The date of this break between the old and the new needs to be underlined. It is important because of the things that were happening to American society in the nineties and to American thinking about the relation of man to his environment. For the new realism arose in response to changes in the social and moral climate. It was the period itself, not a literary concept, that pushed realism, stumbling, across the threshold of naturalism. The end-of-the-century decade begins with the publication of Howells' *A Hazard of New Fortunes*; it ends with *Sister Carrie*. Howells' novel opens the door, utterly against the author's will, to an amoral determinism, and then tries desperately to get it shut again. Dreiser, in 1900, is willing to open it all the way. Between these two dates the American people had seen the old ideal of an agrarian republic beaten to the ground. That Jeffersonian vision of a freehold empire of citizen-lords of the soil, free moral agents each in control of his own bright destiny, had perhaps been no more than a dream from the beginning. Certainly, the economic logic of the Civil War had long since made it obsolete as the basis for social theory and political programs. But a dream dies hard—especially if it has seemed a concrete reality—and it took the Populist defeat of 1892 and the *coup de grâce* delivered to Bryan in 1896 to kill this one.

Thereafter, it became impossible any longer to deny that America would be a nation of industries and of cities—and cities, furthermore, in the image rather of Dreiser's amoral Chicago than of Howells' and Silas Lapham's Boston. The newcomers—men like Fuller and Crane and Dreiser—who began to put their mark on American realism in the nineties were willing, or perhaps one should say able, to concede this point. The first post-Civil War literary generation, their roots did not extend deeply back into the soil of the farmers' and artisans' republic. They were not irrevocably committed to the past and to the values of the past. They could be spokesmen and critics of an industrial order, of "life as it is" (a characteristic phrase of the period) rather than life as, nostalgically considered, it ought to be. That is why the nineties constitute the divide between an old and a new realism. In the final analysis, the qualitative difference between these two stages is the difference between a nation that still wanted to think of itself as "agrarian" and one that has been forced at last to turn its back on that illusion.

William Dean Howells, who cherished the illusion with all his might, is a sadly perfect example of how this change came about—as we shall see when we come to examine *A Hazard of New Fortunes*. But that story comes later. Howells made his literary reputation as the formulator and advocate of the earlier realism (its Dean, as Mencken punningly observes). And we are now concerned with this earlier realism.

America in the nineteenth century found its characteristic mode of literary expression neither in the drama nor in poetry, but (if one leaves political oratory out of account) in prose fiction, that staple article of a middle-class diet. Consequently any investigation into the spirit and content of our older realism must center upon fiction. For an early statement of that content and that spirit, we are indebted to one of the greatest American men of letters, a writer whose vision of life and whose literary method were sharply at odds with those of the men who, in the following generation, would move towards a realistic literature. Nathaniel Hawthorne had no access to the term "realism," which did not exist in the American critical vocabulary of his day. Nevertheless, in his preface to *The House of Seven Gables* (1851), he managed to construct a prophetic definition for the antithesis of his own romantic mode. This antiromantic "form of composition," he declared, "is presumed to aim at a very minute fidelity, not merely to the possible, but to the probable and ordinary course of man's experience." Its province, unlike that of the romance, is not the universal ("the truth of the human heart") but the particular—the surfaces of American life, rendered in detail. On the surface, Hawthorne felt, the ordinary course of American experience was almost insipidly cheerful: "a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight." Thus we have from Hawthorne

an overall concept of realism that differs in no essentials from the definition which Howells would propose towards the close of the nineteenth century, and which may be expressed in a single phrase: the sunlit commonplace. God's in his heaven, all's right with the world—and therefore one may write "truthfully" about it. Anticipating such a prescription for American realism, no wonder Nathaniel Hawthorne chose romance.

Yet in his contempt for easy cheerfulness Hawthorne was by no means a representative American romantic. As he very well knew, the Transcendentalists were much closer than he to the spirit of the pre-Civil War generation. Their cosmic optimism and their belief in the absolute goodness and self-sufficiency of the individual mark their kinship with an expansive and confident age. Too "pagan" and impractical ever to furnish that age with a popular philosophical movement, they nevertheless spoke for it obliquely. And Emerson, hitting the Lyceum trail, spoke to it as well.

Emerson, although emphatically no literary realist, has a part to play in this discussion. For if Hawthorne provided a definition of realism prior to its actual appearance, Emerson, still earlier, had given the strongest possible sanction to the "commonplace" as material for art. Furthermore, in insisting on the essential goodness and beauty of all truth he helped to give a later realism its bent toward optimism. Howells read Emerson and delighted in him. In *Criticism and Fiction* he triumphantly quotes from "The American Scholar" and "The Poet" as though he felt his own concept of realism had Emerson's blessing: "I ask not for the great, the remote, the romantic . . . I embrace the common; I sit at the feet of the familiar and the low . . . Banks and tariffs, the newspaper and caucus, Methodism and Unitarianism, are flat and dull to dull people, but rest on the same foundations of wonder as the town of Troy and the temple of Delphos."

Emerson embraced the common because he believed that it was miraculous. So he said, anyway, and with sufficient conviction to persuade his disciple, Whitman, that "a mouse is miracle enough to stagger sextillions of infidels." But Howells, unfortunately, however deeply impressed by the wonder of the commonplace, could never get this quality into his fiction. The miracle of a man, to say nothing of a mouse, was quite beyond his powers. Yet he did get from Emerson, or share with him, one firm conviction—the universe is an expression of divine purpose. "In life [the realist] finds nothing insignificant," Howells writes, "all tells for destiny and character; nothing that God has made is contemptible . . . his soul is exalted, not by vain shows and shadows and ideals, but by realities, in which alone the truth lies." That "truth," be it noted, is the truth of God. And so the universe is deeply ethical.

And so, all things must work for good. For Howells, this imposes upon a writer the obligation to interpret life morally. Somehow, poetic justice should always triumph, finally. For this is the "truth," and what is realism but a true picture of life?

Emerson's doctrine of compensation at least had the merit of pleading the case for optimism on reasonably subtle grounds. He did not deny the apparent defeats suffered by virtue under the pressures of everyday life. Howells, on the other hand, wanted to equate the true with the good (by which, naturally, he understood his own class's moral standards) in as literal a sense as possible. This hopeful assurance was shared by nearly all the transitional realists of Howells' generation. How, indeed, without it could writers like Stowe and Jewett, Eggleston and Rebecca Harding Davis and Kirkland, have had the courage to "dig into this commonplace, this vulgar American life, and see what is in it?"

Except for Rebecca Harding Davis, whose remark this is, these names bring to mind the local-color movement, that literary fad which swept the country in the seventies and eighties. Mrs. Davis, on the other hand, pioneered in a kind of realism which moves in quite an opposite direction from local color—the literature of industrialism, critically concerned with contemporary social problems, which would ultimately give rise to American naturalism. Local color, with its generally nostalgic mood and its exploitation of preindustrial milieux, belongs for the most part to a larger category which I shall call the agrarian wing of our earlier realism. Its counterpart is the movement towards industrial and urban themes. These two lines of development are, in actuality, not nearly so distinct as a literary historian might conveniently wish them to be. But, to give an historical account of our realism at all, it is necessary to impose some pattern on uncooperative materials, and this is a pattern which makes sense. Between them, these "agrarian" and "industrial" categories allow for an intelligible placing of nearly all our nineteenth-century realists and, what is more important, provide a clue to the spirit in which they wrote.

American realism owes a good deal to the literature of local color, ambivalently realistic though it was. In its pure form, best represented by Bret Harte's sentimental tales, it falsified experience unconscionably. Hearts of gold appear with monotonous regularity under the unlikeliest exteriors, to the moral uplift of a happy, tear-drenched audience. No deviation from the correct sentiments is allowed; a local milieu is exploited simply for its "exotic" qualities, which means that it is neither rendered fully nor organically related to the characters who move within it. Everything is innocent and meaningless. Still, even at the worst, this is not the whole story. Except for its Southern offshoot, which could not let go the myth of a "befo' de war" aristocracy, local-

color fiction based itself on the important assumption that the proper material for literature was the life of common people. It thus had something of the character of genre painting; it was realistic in content if not in spirit.

Moreover, though magazine editors of the seventies and eighties may have favored and promoted a sentimental pattern for the local-color story or novel, by no means all local colorists confined themselves strictly to such a pattern. From the beginning, serious writers sought out, or at least could not avoid, the play of environmental influences upon local character. This certainly holds true for Harriet Beecher Stowe, whose New England novels of the sixties set the stage for the local-color movement of the following decades. Beneath her tireless didacticism one discovers a durable core of realistic observation. *The Minister's Wooing*, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, and especially *Old Town Folks* pay considerable attention to the details of New England domestic life, customs, and theology and to the geographical rather than the mere "landscape" qualities of the region. To the extent that Mrs. Stowe brings these elements to bear upon the shaping of character, her people appeal to a reader's sense of "the probable and ordinary course of man's experience."

The same—with all due allowance for romantic and sentimental excrescences—must be said for such later writers as Eggleston, Kirkland, Cable, Freeman, and Jewett. Their stories may have sold themselves to editors and readers as local color, but they were something more than that, something far more promising for realism; in them, region as exotic backdrop for an improbable didactic drama gives way to region as an actor and force *within* the drama of everyday life. Thus the local-color movement served to establish an audience for a more serious treatment of commonplace existence, and at the same time gave rise to an occasional piece of honest and persuasive regionalism.

No writer better demonstrates local color's potential for realism than Sarah Orne Jewett, whose best stories still carry such an ambience of the New England coast and its people that reading her is like getting one's first teasing whiff of salt air on the way to a Maine vacation. Of course, her stories were a "vacation" for the author herself, quite as much as for her readers—a brief recapturing of the New England past that still survived beyond the noise and smoke of a factory civilization. The charm of this characteristic American nostalgia is what links Miss Jewett's works with that of the local colorists generally. For there is no doubt that the motive of escape is as strong in local color as the motives of easy entertainment and moral uplift, and indeed all these elements are inextricable. Nevertheless, because Miss Jewett wrote from inside her chosen locality, and with a serious concern to render

it accurately because she loved it well, she managed often to avoid the local-color formula. And so her local color becomes regional realism—though a realism which, by choice of region and by nostalgic bias, never overtly offends against Howells' wishful dogma about "the smiling aspects."

Students, I find, usually express surprise upon learning that Harriet Beecher Stowe, foremost poineer in the reform novel, pioneered in local-color realism as well. But, of course, there is nothing surprising about this at all. On the contrary, it is singularly appropriate, and it tells us something important about the spirit of our older realism in general. The reform impulse, from Mrs. Stowe to the muckrakers, springs from a concern with the fate of common people in their everyday lives and proceeds on the assumption that something can be done about that fate by the people themselves. In secular terms, we call these attitudes "equality" and "progress." But for middle-class Americans in the nineteenth century, a church-going people, they had a specific religious content as well—unlimited atonement and salvation by works. These were the cardinal points of the Arminian revolution which shook our Calvinist orthodoxy in the eighteenth century and smashed it to pieces in the nineteenth—with the subversive help, by the way, of Mrs. Stowe's own father, the Reverend Lyman Beecher. But Arminianism had consequences for American literature as well as for American Protestantism—so one discovers in considering the fiction of Reverend Beecher's famous daughter.

A belief in salvation by works (with its corollary of Christ's atonement for all men) rather than by arbitrary grace opens the way to the reformism of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and to the nonsectarian religion of the heart which provides Mrs. Stowe's later regional novels with one of their major themes. But it does more than this. The swing of the pendulum away from "special election" puts a strong religious sanction behind a kind of sentimental equalitarianism, which finds its literary expression in an emphasis on the materials of common, everyday existence. Furthermore, this Arminian revolution, having discarded the doctrine of innate depravity in favor of a cheery message of salvation for all, provides a basis for that pervasive optimism that so distinctly marks and mars our older realism and lingers even in the new. And finally, I think it may be argued that it has an even more fundamental relationship to realism as a literary mode. The absolutes of virtue and depravity nurtured by a Calvinist climate of feeling impose on fiction the kind of universal themes that must be embodied in fable, allegory, symbolism, the forms and methods congenial, that is to say, to a Bunyan—or a Hawthorne. The doctrine of salvation by works (so inevitably appealing to a nation of economic individualists) tends to fix its concern on the

here-and-now world, and so upon particulars rather than upon universals. It is in this sense that nineteenth-century American Protestantism put its weight behind the very method of our literary realism, which has been notoriously hostile to symbolism.

Because of Mrs. Stowe's family connections—through father and brother—with the Arminian reformation, one takes a special satisfaction in discovering its consequences for realism in her fiction. But it is certainly not necessary to rest one's case upon her alone. The entire literature of local-color regionalism that spawned so richly after the Civil War reeks with a smiling philosophy of good works. Art moved obediently to the tune of a comfortable middle-class religion, and only a perverse writer would not know how to discover the essential decencies in the most unpromising human materials. This was the moral atmosphere, then, in which the pattern for our older realism developed. William Dean Howells, one realizes, was not a cause but an effect; if he had not existed Americans would have invented him. No wonder Dreiser, trying in 1900 to break into the clear, almost despaired of doing so and subsided for years into an inglorious editorial lip service to the very assumptions about life that he detested:

> My own experience with *Sister Carrie*, as well as the fierce opposition or chilling indifference which, as I saw, overtook all those who attempted anything even partially serious in America, was enough to make me believe that the world took anything even slightly approximating the truth as one of the rankest and most criminal offenses possible. One dared not talk out loud, one dared not report life as it was, as one lived it.

Dreiser of course lived it in a somewhat less orthodox fashion than the Sons and Daughters of the American Revolution then in official command of American literature. Nevertheless Dreiser is quite right. And what he has to say about literary stock responses just after the turn of the century applies with still greater force to the earlier generation of embryonic realists. Even in terms of their own more circumscribed backgrounds, the local-color regionalists falsified life, cutting the pattern of their fiction to fit the moral-religious bias of their readers —and of themselves. Edward Eggleston aspired to write a fictional social history of postfrontier Indiana and somehow convinced himself that his Christian Endeavor tract, *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, filled the bill. But Eggleston had actually been a clergyman of the new dispensation and never got over it; so consider Joseph Kirkland instead. In his best novel, *Zury: The Meanest Man in Spring County*, Kirkland starts out as if he meant to present a thoroughly unidealized picture of the rural midwesterner and the social conditions that shaped him. This he actually succeeds in doing—only, midway through the book, to undercut his own achievement. Zury, with whose "meanness" we rather

sympathize, because we have been made to understand it, is regenerated by a good woman (a New England schoolmarm, naturally). He sheds warm tears, those sure tokens of the underlying heart of gold, and is reborn as a grotesque Santa Claus who would never, never think of foreclosing on a mortgage.

Whenever a good woman appears in our earlier realism, except in the subversive works of Mark Twain, one can generally count on this sort of thing. Even in Howells she is the sanctified guardian of the American mores. And unfortunately a good woman almost always does show up sooner or later, because (outside of the short story or sketch) our earlier realists seemed incapable of conceiving any more relevant organizing principle than the love-courtship plot. Howells' friend, H. H. Boyesen, who rebelled against the young American girl as "the Iron Madonna who strangles in her fond embrace the American novelist," was perhaps unfair to the actual American girl. The real villainess was not the girl who read the novel but the girl who was in it—and she, poor thing, was there because American authors did not know how to get around a literary convention. When Howells urged in the interests of realism that there were other and truer centers for the novel than courtship, he could hardly have realized the extent of his own treachery to "the smiling aspects of life." Freed from the regenerative influence of the good woman (only to fall in our own times into the hands of the bad one?), American realism could escape at last from the parlors of W. D. Howells to the bars and cathouses of James T. Farrell.

But to return to Kirkland's *Zury*, where the good woman is, at the end, still very much in control of things. What gives this novel its importance is that, in the beginning, she was not. For this half-way achievement of an earthy sense of actual western farm life we can probably thank the westward movement itself. Frontier and backwoods America were, of course, always a potential force for realism. One sees this as far back in the eighteenth century as William Byrd's *History of the Dividing Line*; where "barbarism" began, the scruples of gentility slackened considerably—even for writers gently reared. Mostly, before Mark Twain, the West's potential was a subterranean one so far as *belles-lettres* were concerned, expending itself in the subliterature of western humor, with its "for men only" stress upon the animal qualities. On the whole, the West's chief permanent contribution to American literature was a native vernacular, a "realism" of style rather than of basic orientation.

However, in the work of nineteenth-century writers who concerned themselves seriously with western themes or backwoods conditions, "barbarism" could have a peremptory effect on attitudes and subjects as well. Consider, for example, what it did to that curious "transcendental"

novel of the forties, Reverend Sylvester Judd's *Margaret*. Subtitled "A Tale of the Real and Ideal," it is certainly both in full measure. From a transcendentalizing clergyman one expects the "Ideal." But one is hardly prepared—even with Thoreau in mind—for the earthiness of Reverend Judd's "Real." His alternate chapters about backwoods New England life, with their unshocked portraits of the animalism of an uncivil folk, sound more like *Sut Lovingood's Yarns* than like Emerson. Here, I think, is remarkable evidence of the pressure "western" materials could exert against idealization. Without much doubt the same pressure is working in Joseph Kirkland's *Zury*, for one finds in it some quite conscious links with western humor. Zury Prouder's electioneering speech is in the Davy Crockett tradition, and the author also has some knowing things to say on his own about that mode of humor. What is most real in *Zury*, then, quite as much as what is not, is present because of native rather than derivative influences. And, until sentimentalism gets its foot in the door, the novel is very realistic indeed. This is the highwater mark of our original local-color impulse.

But there was another impulse at work in the late nineteenth century which would produce a far more serious literature of agrarian regionalism. Disenchantment is a great power for realism; and, as a somewhat younger generation of writers took the measure of rural America, they found less and less reason to idealize it. It had been all very well for Jefferson, in his remote world, to declare that "those who work in the earth are the chosen people of God . . . whose breasts He has made His peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtues." But Jefferson—or Crèvecoeur, with his physiocratic raptures about the virtues of farming—had not lived to see the countryside put under bondage to the cities. In post-Civil War America, as the sociologist Josiah Strong would proclaim in his *The Twentieth Century City*, technology had shifted the social and cultural axis of our civilization. As the "Lord of the Soil" lost his potency as folk hero, the urban tycoon stepped in to take his place. The farmer was now only a hick, a hayseed; even his own sons deserted him for the richer possibilities of city life. The westward movement was reversing itself. One response to this tremendous social fact was the nostalgia of the local-color regionalists. A more significant one was the regionalism of disillusion. Men like Ed Howe, Hamlin Garland, Harold Frederic—thoroughly ambivalent about their own rural origins—tried to examine their regions in the light of the altered social perspective. The agrarian dream may still have possessed enough lagging power to flare up brightly in Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech; but even the Populist Garland was no longer really taken in by it. As for Howe and Frederic, they would have nothing to with it at all. *Main*

Street itself is less disenchanted with village life and values than were *The Story of a Country Town* and *The Damnation of Theron Ware.*

Some of this harsh treatment of rural experience is present, of course, in *Zury*—especially the sense of its physical and spiritual erosion of the farm wife, a favorite theme of Garland's as well. But Kirkland pulls his punches. Howe and Frederic never do. *The Story of a Country Town* opens on a desolate social vista of grim labor and grimmer repressions fostered not by indigence but by provincial Protestantism; it closes on a human tragedy produced by representative pressures of the milieu. (A happy-ending chapter is tacked on, testifying to the power of the sentimental tradition over even such a cranky nonconformist as Ed Howe, but it has absolutely nothing to do with the main action.) Frederic's *Damnation of Theron Ware* starts less gloomily, surveying not without humor the trials of a young rural preacher and his wife, badgered by their hidebound and suspicious flock, for whom any yearning towards beauty or richness of experience is the mark of Satan. But the atmosphere changes ominously. Those same commendable aspirations destroy the Reverend Theron Ware's loyalty to the environment that had shaped his moral but rejected his half-formed aesthetic values. Unable to abide the drabness of the old life, he has in him no resources out of which to create and live by a richer set of values. He ends up a moral cretin. It is a sickening story, more deeply disturbing than the antics of Sinclair Lewis's grotesque preacher in *Elmer Gantry* because far more believably motivated. What is especially disturbing is not the degradation of this particular man, but the social sources of that degradation. Agrarian regionalism could hardly get farther away from nostalgia and idealizing. And it almost never got this far.

Garland's regionalism ("veritism" he liked to call it) is less uncompromising, though readers of the nineties thought there ought to be more "brightness" in *Main Travelled Roads* and the American Library Association banned *Rose of Dutcher's Cooley* for its tentative treatment of sex. This must have been quite a shock to Garland, who yielded to no one in his healthy-mindedness. But it is true that, even for him, the wish to render farm life as he actually knew it forced him to acknowledge farm children's barnyard acquaintance with the animal facts. He does not, however, sin deeply against middle-class proprieties in *Rose of Dutcher's Cooley.* Howe and Frederic, though unbanned, were much more subversive. Their two novels imply a dominance of the sexual instincts in man's life, and a warping of these instincts by rural mores, that make a very bad joke indeed of the virtuous husbandman.

Since a willingness to face the sexual nature of man is one of the major touchstones of realism in a culture where religious taboos equate

sex with sin, it seems to me greatly significant that these regionalists of disenchantment managed to broach the subject at all. Clearly, their disillusion with the agrarian myth struck very deep. It was not just a question of whether the American farmer was more or less prosperous and content than he was supposed to be. What was at issue, rather, was an entire way of life, now losing its power over the mind as the world of cities superseded it. These authors could partly liberate themselves from a primary American taboo, one suspects, precisely because the very structure of American society, as their fathers' generation had known it, seemed to be dissolving around them.

The radical disillusion of these agrarian realists brought them close to naturalism. They approached it in their tentative disclosure of man's subservience to instinct, in their doubts about religion, in their demonstration of a deterministic connection between environment and behavior. And they got this far not by way of an ideology or an imitation of European models, but because of a striking dichotomy between ideal and fact in the life of their times. Here, I think, is the key to American naturalism in general; it arose in shocked awareness of that widening gap. For, although the "new realism" was essentially an urban development, it certainly shared with the agrarian realists their pained reaction to the discovery that, after all, the emperor has no clothes.

The agrarian realist wrote in the lengthening shadow of the city. But the second of the major forces shaping American realism was the industrial city itself. For the beginnings of a literature concerned deliberately with this milieu, one must go all the way back to Rebecca Harding Davis, whose earliest novel, *Margret Howth* (1863), appeared appropriately in the midst of the war which guaranteed America's industrial destiny. Mrs. Davis, unlike the early agrarian regionalists, felt a missionary urge to realism from the start and expressed it, in her opening chapter, in almost exactly the terms Howells would use, years later, in *Criticism and Fiction*. She also realized that an American audience had no taste for unpleasing facts. "You," she admonishes her readers, "want something . . . to lift you out of this crowded, tobacco-stained commonplace . . . I want you to dig into this commonplace, this vulgar American life, and see what is in it." To this Mrs. Davis adds a grim coda quite at odds with the Howellsian spirit, yet prophetic for the vision of desolation that industrial conditions would ultimately force even upon Howells: "Sometimes I think it has a new and awful significance that we do not see."

What Mrs. Davis saw, when she dug into the commonplace of factory life, was strongly conditioned by her sense that industrialism somehow represented a monstrous deviation from normal American experience. The norm was agrarian, which she instinctively identified with

moral and spiritual health, and she continually plays images of her dark satanic mills contrapuntally against images of the farm: "the sickly Lois of the mills," for example, is "like an exile dreaming of home . . . the farms . . . the blue air trembling up to heaven exultant with the life of bird and forest." The old Jeffersonian thesis contrasting American husbandman and European proletarian is still at work in this early attempt at industrial realism. For, though factory conditions are shown to degrade some operatives almost to the level of beasts, these are the immigrant workers—aliens. Mrs. Davis certainly recognizes that the factory system is a social force with incalculable power over the individuals enmeshed in it. This is, indeed, its "new and awful significance." But the native Anglo-American, whom she identifies with the preindustrial past, somehow manages to escape the worst effects of this determinism. He still embodies virtue and freedom, and it is Mrs. Davis's hope that his moral efforts can counter the social forces he has set in motion, so that an industrial America may eventually recapture the moral climate of the older and simpler way of life. The good must and will prevail. Her social realism is saturated with nostalgia.

In this, it seems to me, Mrs. Davis sets the pattern for the subsequent nineteenth-century development of industrial-urban realism in which she pioneered. With few execeptions, this is a literature of moral-social criticism, aesthetic motivation being distinctly secondary or absent altogether; and in one way or another its writers betray a common tendency to make the past their point of reference for depicting and analyzing the contemporary industrial reality. Unquestionably this is due to the fact that nearly all of these writers, being of the middle class for whom they wrote, were themselves conscious members of the older stock and so wrote out of "old settler" biases and tastes. Not until the "aliens" themselves invaded our literature did we achieve a realism that truly penetrated the city and factory commonplace and was able to render it on its own terms. This explains the stunning impact of Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* and Sherwood Anderson's moving, if not entirely accurate, praise of Dreiser as a trail blazer in "the wilderness of Puritan denial."

Howells, who came close to breaking through into Dreiser's world, is a classic example of the native compulsion to view the contemporary in terms of the past and an example, as well, of how the shock of "life as it is" could undermine this compulsion and rudely jolt the old realism towards the new. In *The Rise of Silas Lapham* he attempted a benign formulation of the tendencies of a business society. Here, his representative businessman, Silas, a farmer become tycoon, himself constitutes a link between the agrarian and industrial orders; and his

final choice of an ethical over a business success was Howells' way of asserting a happy continuity between the past and the present. But this victory for the smiling aspects was short-lived. *Silas Lapham* had hardly been published when the Haymarket Case of 1886 violently disrupted Howells' conviction that the true and the good were identical. He saw the entire business community close its ranks in support of the legal lynching of the Chicago anarchists, which seemed to him far more subversive of the American tradition than anything the anarchists themselves proposed.

And in 1890 his disillusion took shape in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, which might with justice have been called "Silas Lapham Reappraised." Once again the farmer tycoon appears, but this time the pressures of a business ethic have destroyed his heritage or moral individualism. Though Dreyfoos can still look back somewhat wistfully to his rural past, he cannot, like Silas Lapham, return to it. Through his images of industrialism—the oil derricks that have crowded out the homestead and barns on Dreyfoos' Pennsylvannia farm—Howells insists on America's inability to go home again. And yet the old America is by no means wholly dead in this bitter piece of urban realism. Howells saw what was happening in his country, but he could not quite let himself believe it. The logic of his story forced him towards an amoral view of life, the city as jungle:

> Accident and then exigency seemed the forces at work to this extraordinary effect; the play of energies as free and planless as those that force the forest from the soil to the sky; and then the fierce struggle for survival, with the stronger life persisting... The whole at moments seemed to him lawless, godless.

But it was only at moments that it looked this way. Life could not be godless to this son of rural Ohio. He would not allow it. So he rejects the naturalistic vison that had been thrust upon him by the New York City milieu he chose to examine. He subsides into a moral explanation of amoral phenomena; these things are, after all, simply a consequence of "the individual selfishness," and they may be exorcised by individual rededication to the Christian values of the old society. Mrs. March, one more of Howells' good women, never lets her husband Basil forget that, in spite of appearances, the universe is an ethical order.

Henry B. Fuller, a younger Chicago-bred disciple of Howells, was not so optimistic. The third-generation son of a family of Chicago financiers, he understood that the new America was here to stay. And so what Howells wanted to regard as a deviation Fuller treated as the norm. *The Cliff-Dwellers*, a story of Chicago business and social life in the early nineties, accepts the industrial city in the most significant fashion possible; it determines not just the content of Fuller's novel, but its form as well. (Dreiser, one sees, was on very firm ground in

naming Henry Fuller as the initiator of the new realism, since literary naturalism requires above all that one's action be consciously organized around a determining force.) This novel employs a skyscraper as its center—a testimony to Fuller's eye for social symbols, since the very first modern skyscraper, the Chicago Home Insurance Building, was less than ten years old when *The Cliff-Dwellers* appeared. Fuller uses his "Clifton" office building as a means of bringing together his major characters. But, far more than a device, the building also starkly embodies the business nexus that dominates their behavior, their thought, their values. The representative American of the new dispensation, he demonstrates, is "a money machine."

Here we would seem to have emerged fully into the amoral universe of the naturalists. But not quite. Even this disaffected author must keep one foot in the old world. Fuller was always proudly conscious of his "old settler" background, which he identified with an earlier simplicity, morality, and individualism. And at various critical points in his novels the "old settler" takes over. This happens in *The Cliff-Dwellers* when, midway, Fuller shifts his focus from business to a theme of courtship and marriage. The two themes are related, but as Fuller handles them they actually function in two different spheres; for the first premises outright sociological determinism, while the second clearly assumes free will and an individualistic interpretation of behavior. Furthermore, having made this shift, Fuller lets his central character, Ogden, escape from the business nexus that was on the point of destroying him. And Ogden escapes, let it be added, with the help of a good woman, that unfailing literary token of an attachment to an older way of life. Further evidences of the "old settler" mentality appear elsewhere in Fuller's novels, notably in *With the Procession*, where, through Susan Bates, a robber baroness with the simple tastes and morals of her farm-girl upbringing, Fuller tries like Howells before him to establish a benign connection between the past and present. Howells put Mrs. Bates in his anthology of favorite American heroines. And well he might. She is the best possible proof that Fuller, whose Chicago novels represent a decisive step towards the new realism, was still not quite prepared to deal unreservedly with urban-industrial realities. Some of the "agrarian" consciousness of Rebecca Harding Davis still lingers in this Chicagoan's mind. It betrays itself in a fitful evasion of the amoral consequences of those urban social forces he himself so solidly establishes. In the end, this pioneer of the new realism is no more than a halfway determinist.

One of the characters in Henry Fuller's second Chicago novel, *With the Procession*, states the author's conviction that the late seventies saw a conclusive shift in the character of American society. The hundredth

anniversary of the republic, followed immediately by the tremendous railroad riots that brought home for the first time a realization that America was no longer a homogeneous, agrarian-oriented society, constituted the great divide between past and future. The "real world," the proper province of the end-of-the-century literary realist, lay altogether on this side of the divide:

> The simple hopes and ideals of this Western world of fifty years ago—even of twenty years ago—where are they now? ... What the country really celebrated at Philadelphia in 1876, however unconsciously, was the ending of its minority ... The broad life of the real world began for us the very next year ... and has been going on more fiercely ever since.

Although he recognized this to be true, Fuller could not accept it with equanimity. But a trio of younger writers, all born at the outset of the critical seventies, did accept it. Crane, Norris, and Dreiser got beyond the backward-looking realism of shock and disillusion. With them, the leviathan of cities and business thrust American literature over the threshold of naturalism. All three of these writers opened their minds to "the fierce struggle for survival" from which Howells retreated. The philosophy of amoral determinism which they accepted may have been hardly less naive than the old-fashioned moral compulsions of their predecessors, but at least it did not have to deny or distort inescapable social tendencies. It worked for them both as a theory of behavior and as a principle of selection determining the nature of their "commonplace." They also used it as a *formal* principle, the final step on the road to the new realism.

Crane's *Maggie: A Girl of the Streets*—published the same year as Fuller's *Cliff-Dwellers*—opens with the clearest and most intentional demonstration that its urban slum is a jungle of competitive animals. It concludes, as Fuller's novel did not, on the same note, but significantly underlined; Maggie, incarnate principle of love and aspiration, is cast out and destroyed by an environment that has no place for the values she embodies. Whether he intended it or not, Crane, in this first unqualified piece of American naturalism, has written an oblique fable of the triumph of the new image of America over the old; here, the "good woman" regenerates nobody.

Frank Norris, a self-confessed romantic who was more interested in naturalism as an organizing device than as a philosophy, was kinder to his good woman. In *The Octopus*, he wavers between presenting her as a principle of animal fecundity or of moral regeneration, but ultimately decides on the latter. No more masculine character ever succumbed more tearfully to the sentimental female than Norris's Buck Annixter. Nevertheless, this is only an episode. In the end, determinism has its way; the railroad, symbol of industrial force and business ethics,

destroys both Annixter and his loving wife without a qualm. Nor has it any more compassion for old-fashioned moral probity as it first corrupts and then disintegrates Magnus Derrick, representative of a Southern agrarian code of honor.

Dreiser, of course, is not even marginally concerned to demonstrate the submergence of an older view of life. "Alien" that he was, he took for granted what an entire generation of "old settler" realists had had to learn so painfully and so reluctantly. Like Jack London, he had only to read Spencer and Huxley to realize that here was his gospel; and he was so untouched by native middle-class biases that practically nothing the industrial city spread before him could repel him at all. *Sister Carrie* explores urban worlds that Howells—or Henry Fuller for that matter—did not know existed and that Stephen Crane could not really enter. Dreiser does not even bother to raise the question of the good woman. Carrie Meeber came to the big city from the countryside, but she appears never to have heard of the agrarian myth. Could it be that Dreiser's early audience was shocked, not just at his reversal of the formula that virtue alone must be rewarded, but (somewhere deep within its collective American unconscious) at the spectacle of a *country* girl yielding so easily to amoral persuasions? At any rate, the author was not shocked. In Theodore Dreiser, the post-Civil War American "commonplace" had found, at last, its adequate spokesman. The date was 1900. The new century had begun. And with it, American realism reached its majority.

University of Minnesota

BOOK REVIEWS

A Critical Bibliography of the Published Writings of Romain Rolland. By William Thomas Starr. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1950. xxiii, 138 p.

It was a basic belief of Romain Rolland that the twentieth-century intellectual could influence the social and political behavior of society. In fact, in a letter to Roger Bodard in 1936 he went so far as to condemn those who laid claim to a measure of intelligence yet shied away from political engagements. For anyone who does not share his thorough faith in the ability of the armchair critic to alter the destiny of civilization, the evaluation of the thought and writings of this most social-minded of contemporary French authors becomes a perplexing and frustrating problem.

Professor William Starr's extensive and richly annotated bibliography of the works of and about Romain Rolland should prove an invaluable guide to the undaunted who would approach Rolland from a nonpartisan point of view. Before the publication of the present work, the closest thing to a bona fide bibliography of the prolific writings of this author was contained in J. Bonnerot's *Romain Rolland, sa vie, son œuvre,* which dates back to 1921. Professor Starr brings the bibliography up to 1949 in a painstaking, chronological classification in two parts (with two useful indices): the writings of Rolland are listed first, and a second section is devoted to studies, comments, reviews, attacks, and homages. The reader will be amazed to note the number of doctoral dissertations on Rolland in the past two decades. The second part is well nigh conclusive, for it includes not only works completely devoted to the author but also those which pertain only partially to him—a task which involved a far wider range of investigation. A glance at the number of countries in which works about Romain Rolland have been published and at the variety of languages represented by the periodicals cited brings into focus the international character of this French writer's reputation.

Professor Starr, author of a previous work on the subject, *Romain Rolland's Internationalism* (1939), reveals a wealth of knowledge about Rolland and is able to comment with authority on the critical works listed. His remarks conveniently point out in which of his roles the versatile author has been studied: as novelist, dramatist, essayist, biographer, historian, or polemist. He has indicated not by typographical emphasis but by his personal evaluation the more significant of these works on Rolland and has also taken pains to suggest the influences of one study on another. Here, then, is bibliography in its most fertile form, not a mechanical compilation but a careful analysis and keen coordination.

In a very pertinent introduction the author gives several leads to fields of investigation in which there exists to date an insufficiency of scholarship. Even the most cursory examination of this critical bibliography will substantiate Professor Starr's contention that the principal tendency has been to sidetrack Rolland's concepts of art, his achievements as a literary man, critic, and historian of the arts. This neglect might be partially attributed to the prevailing trend toward the biographical and historical approach to modern literature. In the case of

Romain Rolland the disproportion between the number of studies on his ideology and those devoted to his abilities as a literary man is, however, due chiefly to the author's own insistence on the messianic character of his social and political convictions.

Was Romain Rolland too civilized for his time? Were his dreams of European federation, his belief in pacifism, his faith in the common man and in leadership through knowledge, the illusions of a kindly, bookish theorist? Did he realize the paradox of his position, which Henri Barbusse so aptly characterized as that of a "révolutionnaire isolé"? Were his socialistic theories adaptable to the type of society needed by the kind of artist he idealized? These questions demand a cooler, more impartial appraisal than his contemporaries have been able to furnish about this citizen of the world.

Interesting statistics can be gathered from the quantity of writing about this ubiquitous writer. The greatest number of major works about him appeared in two significant years. The first was 1915 when he had declared himself openly a pacifist and had taken his isolated position "au-dessus de la mêlée"; the other important year is 1936, the year of his seventieth birthday, when he received the type of homage generally reserved for obituaries.

The present bibliography may help provide a measuring stick to determine the extent of the direct influence of Romain Rolland's ideology—the mark left not only on his compatriots and on western Europeans but on the youth of Russia and on the Oriental mind. The wide range and prophetic tone of his writings found him champions in a variety of camps, many diametrically opposed to each other. Rolland lived long enough to see some of his dreams shattered and some of the disasters he had feared come true. He was obliged to revise in the light of events his position on Franco-German amity. He might have had the same type of revision to make about Russia. But dying in 1944 he left enough circumstantial evidence in his writings to allow the communists of western Europe to draw on him as a spiritual force and for the periodical, *Europe*, to be able to call him in 1950 "notre guide."

The following items are not found listed in the bibliography: Camille Spiesse, *Lettre ouverte à Romain Rolland* (Colombes, 1932); Henri Herz, "Romain Rolland," in *Panorama des livres* (Compagnons de Route, 1937); H. Smith, "Romain Rolland," *Saturday Review of Literature*, Jan. 6, 1945. The following studies, also omitted, may not have been available to Professor Starr: Alexander Aronson, *Romain Rolland, the Story of a Conscience* (Padma, 1944); Alexander Aronson and Krishna Kripalani, *Rolland and Tagore* (Visva-Bhaiali, 1945); and K. H. Bodensiek, *Über Romain Rolland* (Stuttgart, 1948).

This sound and finely documented bibliography should serve for many years as a handbook to critics and scholars who face the task of deciding whether the kaleidoscopical Romain Rolland was primarily an interpreter of the giants of thought or deserves a place in the same orbit as those whom he served as biographer. Judgment will have to be reserved until it becomes possible to determine with greater perspective the basic values of his thought and art.

ANNA BALAKIAN

Syracuse University

CANCIONCILLAS "DE AMIGO" MOZÁRABES. By Dámaso Alonso. Publicado en la *Revista de Filología Española*, XXXIII (1949), p. 297-349.

En el estudio de la discutida cuestión de los orígenes de la lírica europea es necesario tener en cuenta la teoría que Dámaso Alonso formula sobre la base de un grupo de nuevos datos, sistematizados y expuestos de manera ordenada en

este artículo. Estos datos proceden de estudios de hebraístas y arabistas (Millás Villacrosa, Stern, Cantera y García Gómez) en los que tratan de aclarar el sentido de los versos finales de algunas composiciones hebreas y también árabes del género de las *muwaššahas*. Estos versos finales (última estrofa llamada *jarya*) están escritos en un dialecto vulgar ibero-románico y con mezcla de árabe.

Dámaso Alonso recoge esta aportación de datos, la depura desde un punto de vista de filólogo románico hasta donde es posible la interpretación de las lecciones, y formula con los resultados una teoría literaria sobre los orígenes de la lírica peninsular. Como las composiciones hebreas y árabes pueden situarse en el tiempo por ser de autores concocidos, resulta que estas *jaryas* nos ofrecen fechas notablemente tempranas; una de ellas ha podido ser escrita antes de 1042, anterior entonces en un siglo a la datación del *Poema del Cid* propuesta por Menéndez Pidal, y anterior también a la vida de Guillermo de Poitiers (1071-1127). Se trata, pues, de restos de viejísimas "canciones de amigo" mozárabes, cuyo primer problema está en la interpretación de los textos escritos en caracteres hebraicos y árabes. Pero salvada en parte ésta, tales coplillas son testimonio de una lírica mozárabe que ha podido ser el fondo de la poesía tradicional de España y Portugal. Y puesta la cuestión en el dominio europeo, la importancia de estos hallazgos es transcendental; dice Dámaso Alonso: "desde 1948 el problema de los orígenes de la lírica románica y de la europea ha cambiado totalmente: ha de plantearse de nuevo" (pág. 333). Para él, el núcleo de la discusión ha de desplazarse del zéjel al villancico primitivo, y en este sentido orienta su tesis, que sitúa el origen en el campo románico. Pero la formación, difusión y arraigo de esta poesía pertenece a la colaboración de cristianos, moros y judíos. Como un ejemplo más que corrobora la tesis de Américo Castro, la reunión de los tres pueblos en el suelo andaluz resulta extraordinariamente fructífera en la creación y desarrollo de una lírica peculiar que hasta ahora representa la "primavera temprana de la lírica europea" (como subtitula Dámaso a su artículo).

Escrito con ánimo ardoroso y con un sentido de creación sugeridora que es un caso maduro de la maestría de su autor, este artículo ha de tener gran repercusión en este dominio crítico de los orígenes, tan propicio siempre a polémicas. Entretanto es de esperar que crezca el número de datos de los hebraístas y arabistas, y entren en juego nuevos testimonios para perfilar mejor los datos hasta ahora recogidos.

Francisco López Estrada

Universidad de Sevilla